
A guide to interpreting horse-drawn carriages in museum collections

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Horse-drawn carriages are found in museums across the country. A handful of collections consist of mostly carriages and little else. Some contain a few carriages along with other items, often transport related. Some museums may just have one carriage in the collection.

However many carriages you care for, this guide, funded by Arts Council England, has been compiled to help when you are planning for their interpretation in your museum.

This guide seeks to:

- explain the basics of museum interpretation
 - establish some key facts about carriages for newcomers to the subject
 - explore the approaches to interpreting these objects
 - inspire you to create great interpretation
 - provide you with information and contacts you may need in the future
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This guide does not seek to:

- provide advice on the physical display of objects in terms of collections care or management;
 - advise on how carriages may assist with audience development; or
 - be an exhaustive authority on the subject. It is instead a ready-reference guide to provide some inspiration and, we hope, confidence when it comes to interpreting carriages in your collection.
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For some people this guide will represent a first foray into the world of horse-drawn carriages. For others it will hopefully reinforce what you already know and do in your professional practice. Feel free to take away what you need to from it.

What is interpretation?

Interpretation in the heritage sector has a variety of applications and there are a range of definitions that are used to describe it.

At its heart, however, it is the **transfer of information** from an institution (in our case museums, heritage sites, historic houses etc.) to a visitor. Interpretation is the means by which we communicate that information. Often it is related to an object, artefact, item, specimen or art work. The best interpretation seeks to engage visitors with that object and to communicate information about it in a meaningful and relevant way, rather than simply being a catalogue printed on the wall.

Heritage interpretation often takes on a **written** form – printed on a label, panel, leaflet etc. – but it can also be audio, shown on a screen, delivered in person, part of an interactive experience or a range of other means.

Choosing which device to use for your interpretation is perhaps the most fun part, but the best interpretation involves some background work before we get to that point. This involves writing an **Interpretation Plan**. Plans for the reinterpretation of an entire museum will run to hundreds of pages, while a simple interpretation plan for one object may fit on half a side of paper. However short, they are still worth writing. There is no strict format for an interpretation plan, but they tend to answer **four key questions**.

In relation to horse-drawn carriages:

Why is this carriage going on display?*

Who is our audience? What do we know about them and the way they interact with carriages? What barriers do they encounter and how can we start to overcome these?

What do we want to get across to them? What is the message of this carriage or collection?

How will we communicate this to them?

Further and more detailed guides to heritage interpretation are referenced in the [More information](#) section.

*There could be a range of reasons why you may be displaying a carriage in your museum – curatorial, thematic, financial, storage/collections care, audience demand, necessity/no choice etc. As these factors are so varied, and will be unique to your own museum, this guide does not focus on the reasons why carriages are to be displayed and assumes that you do want to display at least one carriage. The guide focusses, instead, on the three other questions that are more directly linked to interpretation delivery.



If reading this guide represents your first step into the world of horse-drawn carriages, you may be bewildered by some of the terminology. These pages seek to establish some of the basics of carriages and are intended to be an orientation for the beginner.

If you don't know your drag shoe from your footboard, there is also a [Glossary](#) at the end of this guide.

Definition of a 'horse-drawn carriage'

A wheeled vehicle for people, usually horse-drawn, and usually designed for private passenger use.

Note: When we say 'carriage' in this guide, we mean 'horse-drawn carriage', as defined above. It should be remembered, however, that many of the principles discussed here are relevant beyond the interpretation of just carriages. People working with large transport-related objects in museum collections of all types will hopefully find elements of this guide useful.

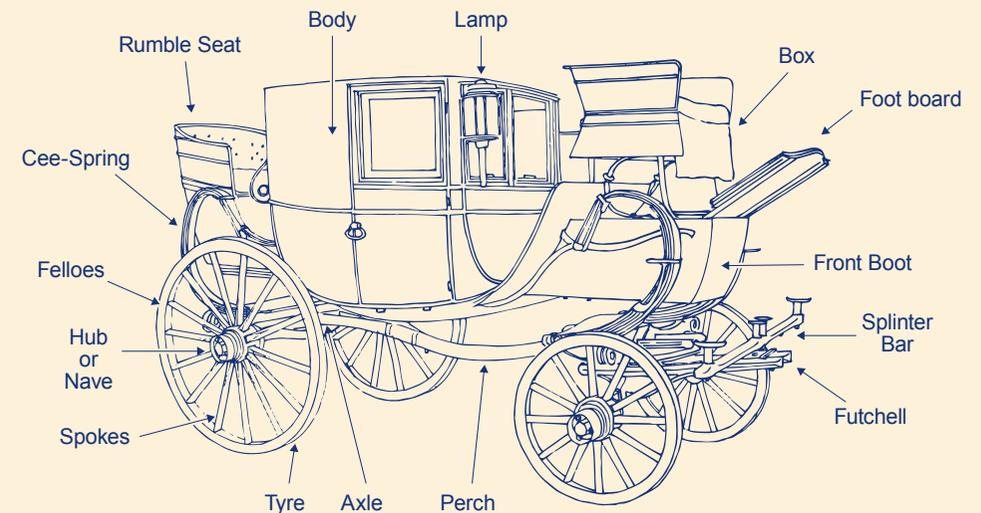
Historical context

Wheeled vehicles drawn by horses, oxen or humans have existed for thousands of years, but it was not until the late 16th century that carriages and coaches were introduced into Britain from continental Europe. The golden age of carriages began in the late 18th century as living standards continued to rise and better roads were built. Throughout the 19th century the range and variety of carriages increased, both for private and public use.

Horse-drawn transport largely survived the introduction of railways, but the development of the internal combustion engine and the arrival of the motor car at the turn of the 20th century made many forms of carriage obsolete. Nowadays the vast majority of horse-drawn vehicles are for ceremonial or leisure use.

Parts of a carriage

Although each individual carriage is almost unique, there are some common parts of carriages that crop up regularly.



Types of carriages

If you come across a carriage you've not heard of before, here is a quick guide to the most common types.

Barouche

a luxurious open four-wheeled carriage seating two; a summer vehicle for park driving.

Brake or break

an open, four-wheeled vehicle.

Britzschka

a four-wheeled travelling carriage, introduced from Austria in 1818. A distinguishing feature is that the body has a straight bottom line.

Brougham

a four-wheeled carriage that can be pulled by a single or pair of horses.

Buggy

a light four-wheeled American carriage. There are many different designs.

Cabriolet

a two-wheeled vehicle with a hood for two people, imported from France.

Chariot

a closed four-wheeled carriage with one forward facing seat for two people.

Clarence

a four-wheeled carriage for a pair of horses, for town use. Clarence Cabs were also known as 'Growlers'.

Coach

a large, usually closed, four-wheeled carriage with two or more horses harnessed as a team, controlled by a coachman and/or one or more postilions.

Curricule

a light two-wheeled vehicle for a pair of horses.

Dog Cart

a general purpose vehicle for transporting people, luggage, shopping or dogs.

Dormeuse

a luxurious carriage for long distance travel. The long front boot enables it to be converted for sleeping.

Drag

a sporting vehicle for private driving. Also known as a Park Coach or Private Coach. The roof seats enable it to be used as a grandstand at sporting events.

Gig

a light two-wheeled vehicle, usually with a forward facing seat for two people.

Governess Cart

a two-wheeled vehicle with a round body and a rear door. It is driven from the right-hand rear corner. A popular vehicle for a governess to take out children in her care.

Hansom cab

A two-wheeled vehicle for a single-horse. The cab driver sits high at the back. The

original 1834 design was by the architect James Hansom. This vehicle was soon improved by James Chapman and reached its final form in 1880.

Landau

a four-wheeled open carriage with seats facing forwards and back. These could be enclosed with folding leather hoods. Introduced from Germany in the early 19th century.

Norfolk Cart

a two-wheeled country cart with slatted sides and back to back seating for four people.

Omnibus

a four-wheeled passenger vehicle first developed in Paris in 1662.

Phaeton

a light, owner-driven open carriage with four wheels.

Surrey

a four-wheeled American vehicle with two forward facing seats and a fringed canopy or solid top.

Victoria

A fashionable low-built open four wheeled carriage used with a single horse or pair of horses. A type associated with Queen Victoria.

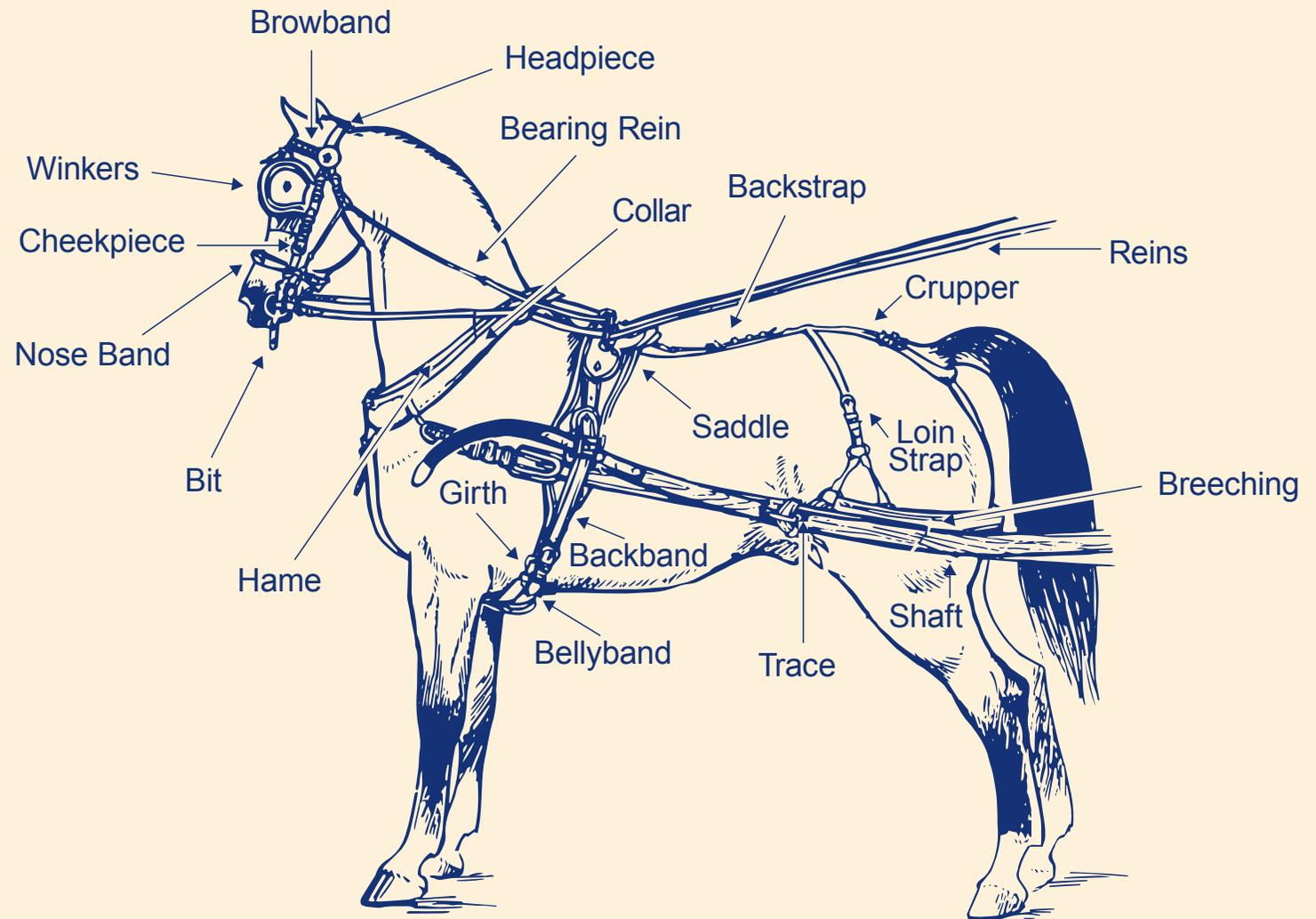
Wagonette brake

a general purpose country vehicle with two inward facing bench seats seating six or more.

How to harness a horse

Many objects in museum collections related to carriages are linked to horses and their harness. Indeed, you may have some of these items in your collection without having an actual carriage. This visual guide identifies the main parts of a harness and tells you what goes where.

When it comes to rigging up harness for display (for example on model horses in front of a carriage) it's best to consult with an expert who knows what they are doing. It won't take them long to dress, but they know all the mistakes *not* to make.



All good interpretation is planned with the audience that is going to experience it in mind. As part of this project we observed and talked to visitors in museums and we drew on some **audience research** that has taken place in the sector. We also analysed the TripAdvisor reviews of some carriage museums across the country, to see what people say about their visits.

For most general visitors, carriages tend to be **something they stumble across** in museums – often they have not gone to a museum specifically to see a carriage and they are not necessarily expecting to encounter one.

Their responses to carriages when they do see them are **generally positive**. There are even some surprised visitors who suggest that carriages are better than they expected they would be.

People say they find carriages ‘interesting’ but rarely *why* they are interesting. They are **not enthused** by them in the way they are by dinosaurs, spacecraft or mummies, about which they can wax lyrical. That’s understandable given the competition in the heritage sector.

Indeed, in museums where carriages are not the main attraction, they can be **forgettable** and don’t seem to be remembered that well by visitors, unless there are more than just a few on display. In social history museums they can be overlooked and in general transport museums, carriages are rarely the stars of the show. Trains, planes and automobiles – vehicles we still use today – are all more immediately accessible and relatable than a form of transport that many have never used and never will.

That said, some stories and themes are seen as particularly memorable. Stories of **famous ownership** are popular, as are **intriguing or incongruous** facts, for example the use of a

carriage in a royal wedding, its featuring in a period drama or even in a *Carry On* film! For general audiences, more **technical stories** about manufacture, production and engineering aspects are not that engaging. We shouldn’t forget, however, that there is a dedicated audience for whom this is very popular.

When it comes to **dedicated carriage museums** or collections, visitors are much more enthused and are ready to engage with carriages to a higher level. Evidence suggests that they are **more likely to remember their encounters with carriages** in this setting.

Interpretation for horse-drawn carriages seems to work best when it is **close to the carriage itself**, such as on a stand-up sign or freestanding lectern. Visitors perceive a disconnect between interpretative content and vehicles if they aren’t physically close together. While keeping interpretative devices away from carriages may make for unobstructed views and create more pleasing photo-opportunities, it is to the detriment of visitors who want to engage with the objects and their interpretation in a meaningful way.



Thinking about visitors

Visitors told us that they get real impact from a carriage when they have contact or connection with **a real person** – a guide, curator, expert or volunteer. This human touch is particularly appreciated and creates a more memorable experience.

Visitors also told us that they get more out of carriages that are **populated** in some way, either by horses or mannequins which can bring the object to life. Visitors say life-sized horse mannequins allow them to see the ‘engine’ of the carriage. Visitors describe carriages displayed without horses as less engaging. They feel they are required to make an imaginative leap. That said, some mannequins and horse models are viewed as being ‘a bit creepy’, so should perhaps be used with caution.

Visitors enjoy seeing carriages **in context** and like the theming of spaces in which they are displayed. Cobbles on the floor, tufts of fake grass, recreated shop windows and models of passengers in the carriage all give a sense of realism to the experience.

Visitors also have a natural urge to touch and **want to get inside carriages** on display. When they can get in, they absolutely love it. When they can’t they want to know *why* they can’t.

What do you know about your visitors?

Who are they and what are they into?

How do they interact with carriages in your museum at present?

What do they tell you about the current display?

Are any of the findings above familiar to you?

What does this tell you about how you might interpret carriages in the future?

It's clear that horse-drawn carriages are not straightforward things to display and interpret. They are large, often fragile and were originally made to be used and moved, not sit motionless in a museum display. Given that the majority of star carriages are approaching 200 years old, collection care also needs to be addressed as part of how we display and interpret them.

Based partly on the audience research above, and the expertise of the carriage curators who were part of our project, here we acknowledge some of the challenges to interpreting carriages and offer a few ideas about how we might start to manage them.

People want to touch carriages

Carriages are appealing and often charismatic objects. They're designed to be used and through their very nature often seem to invite visitors to touch them. Museums who wish to preserve their carriages want visitors to be able to access and enjoy their collection items, while at the same time preventing them from touching (or getting in!) carriages. However, there is also a need not to put up too much of a barrier or create too much distance between visitors and

objects, lest they end up viewing carriages as items in glass boxes, beyond human contact and understanding.

Museums have

- created barriers that are obviously designed to keep visitors away, but are unobtrusive
- installed signage and messaging explaining *why* visitors are not allowed to touch or get in
- offered a personal explanation to visitors by a guide or volunteer
- installed barriers that carry interpretative content on them, engaging people with the carriage, rather than persuading them to keep away
- installed interactives that give a sense of getting into a carriage seat
- installed a carriage ride simulator



Interactive barrier posts at Staffordshire County Museum carry interpretative puzzles while the chains keep visitors away from the carriages



The National Trust Carriage Museum, Arlington Court offers visitors the chance to sit in two different carriage seats to see how they compare. It goes some way to giving them the physical sensation of being in a carriage, without actually getting in.

Carriage interiors are not accessible

Many carriages have beautiful interiors. For some audiences these are often the most enticing element of a carriage, especially for non-specialists. If we are saying to our visitors that they can't get inside a carriage, they at least want to be able to see inside. But carriages are also often tall objects, inaccessible from the ground. How can we create opportunities for visitors to see inside?

Museums have

- installed steps and ramps up
 - provided inexpensive toy periscopes for visitors to use to see inside carriages
 - offered torches to children to shine on elements they like
 - taken images and made films of the inside of carriages to show to visitors
-



Visitors to the Chelsea Flower Show were invited to look inside a carriage from a stepped platform

Carriages can be difficult to integrate into collections

When planning displays it is likely that we will want to present some of our interpretation of horse-drawn carriages in terms beyond simply transport. Carriages offer us a range of storytelling opportunities. (The chapters on [Ways in to carriages](#) and [Learning outcomes](#) later in this guide discuss in more detail the opportunities carriages provide in this respect.) A good way of doing this is to display carriages alongside other items from the museum's collection, so that they can sit in context and be understood in broader terms.

Many museums and historic houses display their carriages in a space that was designed for them – carriage houses, stables etc. These spaces give the objects a sense of realism, being shown in exactly the right place. But this also brings challenges. Often the environmental conditions in these spaces are not suitable for other collection items, for example organics, paintings etc. and prevent them from being displayed there.

Carriages are also large objects which, when shown alongside smaller collection items, may dominate them, visually.

How, then, can museums integrate carriages with other collection items?

Museums have

- found it easiest to integrate carriages with other transport objects that require similar conditions and care
 - moved the carriages into the main museum space to be alongside other objects
 - created contextual interpretation, such as street scenes, that allow for the inclusion of other transport and social history objects in the display
 - taken images and made films of the inside of carriages to show to visitors
 - shown images of other objects from the collection in interpretation panels close to carriages
 - directed visitors to the main collection to see more
-



The Mossman Collection integrates carriages into the rest of its collection in a mixed display in the museum gallery.

Carriages can look in a sorry state

Not all carriages look like they are ready for service. They are large and costly things to care for and the full conservation of a carriage can come with a hefty price tag. There is a challenge, therefore, of how to interpret objects that haven't been conserved or are in a state of disrepair.

Museums have

- celebrated the age of their carriages, asking visitors to wonder what life was like at a time
 - made a point of the fact that the carriages are unrestored, explaining that the objects on display have not been altered over time
 - acknowledged that some period dramas have over-restored carriages that are not necessarily in keeping with authentic carriage heritage
 - used the condition of a carriage to attract a development or fundraising initiative to work towards a conservation project
-

There's a lot of jargon

Like any other sub-group of museum objects, carriages come with their own terminology, technical names and historical language. We know that using jargon or specialist terms in our interpretation alienates visitors and makes them feel that the museum space isn't for them.

How then can we make some of the more technical aspects of carriages engaging for everyday visitors who are not specialists?

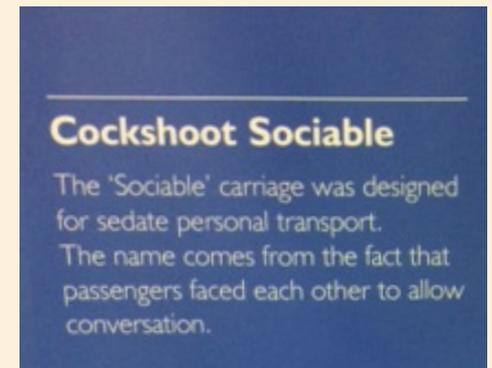
Museums have

- used technical terms sparingly, at least in the first layer of interpretation a visitor may encounter
- gone into more depth, and technicality, in further layers of interpretation, such as printed sheets or forms of more detailed information
- explained what we mean when we use a specialist term, providing a definition or explanation of a word
- used the explanation of a term as an interpretative starting point for a story, for example explaining that the words glove compartment, dashboard and boot all originate in horse-drawn carriage terminology
- provided glossary-style definitions of some terms (Note: these work best when the definition is in close proximity to the word, not a glossary panel at the other end of the room)

Carriages are perceived as a bit boring

Despite the great stories that surround carriages, many visitors still don't get that excited about them as part of a general visit to a museum. Audience research indicates that they are sometimes overlooked in favour of more charismatic objects.

Museums face a challenge in trying to engage people with these objects. In the rest of this guide we suggest some solutions to making carriages as engaging and involving as possible, in particular the sections on [Ways in to carriages](#) and [Interpretative devices](#).



This panel at the Museum of Science and Industry in Manchester explains the meaning of the word 'sociable'.

Are these the issues you face when displaying carriages?
Do you agree with the ideas here?
Are there better solutions to these challenges?
What other challenges do you have when displaying carriages and how have you started to overcome them?

It's clear that those planning interpretation of horse-drawn carriages need to think hard about how they are going to engage visitors with the objects. Here we seek to establish how we can **make carriages relevant to our audiences** and their existing ideas and interests.

In some cases – especially for those who are already used to looking at carriages, or who have come to the museum to look at them specifically – finding a way in isn't too big a challenge. For this small, but important, part of the audience the objects will be able to speak for themselves.

But for the most part, given what we already know about how people interact with carriages (see [Thinking about visitors](#) above), we are faced with the challenge of how to engage people with these objects.

This chart recommends some of the most popular – and perhaps unusual – **Ways in to carriages**. These are the **potential hooks** that you can use to **attract and snare** visitors in. They are the subjects that visitors are mostly likely to pick up on.

Level 1	Carriages and how they relate to what audiences already know and understand
Human stories	the people who owned, made and drove carriages
Horse stories	tack and reins, stables, life as a working horse, conditions, feed
Cultural stories	carriages in literature, film, tv (period dramas, Black Beauty, War Horse etc.)
Comparative stories	parts of carriages gave names to parts of our modern vehicles (boot, dash etc.)
Level 2	Carriages and society
Social stories	ownership, social stratification, royals and riches, status, working conditions, slavery, class, race, comparing attitudes of the past with those today
Level 3	Intriguing and incongruous carriage stories
Danger stories	tales of risk, death, highwaymen and injury
Sporting stories	carriage driving, speeding and racing, winning and losing
Ceremonial stories	pomp and pageantry, famous events, Cinderella and bling
Fashion stories	dress, wigs, hats and livery
Usage stories	how was this carriage used? what did it do and why?
Ownership stories	famous (and infamous) names and personalities associated with carriages

This is not a strict hierarchy of ways in to carriages. It may be that the right way in for a particular carriage may be a conservation or technical story. But it would be a shame if all the ways in for all of the carriages were consistently from lower down this chart. The aim of prioritising some hooks in this format is to demonstrate those ways in that are most likely to attract a general visitor by being as relevant to them as possible. Hooks that relate to what visitors already know and understand are much more likely to result in meaningful engagement than those which are overly technical or museum-centric.

Level 4	Carriage-centric stories
Historical stories	charting a history of transportation, carriages move across different historical periods
Classification stories	hierarchy of carriages and carriage 'type'
Design stories	history of how carriages developed, trends and styles over time
Identification stories	spotting the various parts of a carriage, along with little quirks hidden in the objects
Technical stories	axles, springs, physics, forces, engineering and designs that changed the way we move
Place stories	where carriages drive from and to
Communication stories	letter writing, keeping in touch, post and transport, speed and efficiency
Level 5	Behind-the-scenes of curating and caring for carriages
Construction stories	joinery, carpentry, joists, carving, fixing, makers and craftsmen
Art historical stories	carriage decoration, style, symbolism and allegory
Manufacturing stories	who made it? when? where?
Display space stories	the room we are in and its meaning/relevance to the carriage
Conservation stories	how carriages have been treated and managed over the years, restored and conserved

An important part of the interpretation planning process is to ask ourselves **‘What’s going to happen to our visitors once they’ve finished their visit?’**

Learning outcomes are the results that we would like to see in our visitors after they have read or used our interpretative devices. If our interpretation is going to have a meaningful effect on them, it is useful for us to know the kind of effect we’d like that to be, before we start planning for it.

‘Learning’ in itself is a loaded word, with lots of connotations (many of them negative) around school and exams. In the heritage sector we think of learning in very broad terms. Any form of change, effect or shift in our visitors, no matter how small, can be counted as ‘learning’.

Learning outcomes are often **knowledge based**. In museums we deal a lot with facts and figures – that’s partly because of the way we think about objects, and the information we hold about them in our catalogues and publications. When agreeing knowledge-based learning outcomes we usually write down a take away fact or idea – the main thing you want your visitor to know and remember when they’ve left the museum. What is it we want them to know? Or to ‘get’? We call this intellectual outcome the **message** (or messages if there are more than one).

It’s easy when we start writing interpretative copy for a carriage to go straight to the catalogue entry and to write out what we find there – type of carriage, date, maker etc. And we’ll probably describe what we can see on the carriage, perhaps pointing out any distinctive features of it. That’s all very well, but is that *really* the message you wanted your visitor to take away? (If you’re tempted to do this, look back at [Ways in to Carriages](#) and see where those carriage-centric factoids come in the table.)

Maybe you’d like them to understand why this carriage was important to a specific person? Maybe you’d like to focus on a cultural aspect of the carriage? Maybe you want them to appreciate something about society at the time it was made or used? Maybe you’d like to explore the object from the point of view of the horses?

If getting these kinds of messages across is part of your aim, then you need to do more than simply list when and where it was made and what type of carriage it is. That’s why **writing down the messages we want to get across to visitors** will help us later on when we come to actually choose interpretative devices and write interpretative copy.

But learning outcomes don’t need to be simply intellectual – they can also be **experiential**. An outcome can be social, emotional or inspirational. That’s why in the list below you’ll see plenty of outcomes that aren’t simply facts about carriages.

Learning outcomes have to be **realistic**. And ideally they ought to be **measurable**, so that they can be evaluated at some point in the future. It might be a great ambition to say ‘visitors will to be inspired to own a carriage of their own one day’ but while that’s not an impossible outcome, it’s not that realistic or measurable. Writing learning outcomes draws on our existing knowledge about our audience and also the potential [Ways in to carriages](#) that we’ve identified for that audience.

The selection of example messages listed here have been arrived at using the Generic Learning Outcomes model, which is now an established tool for how we describe learning in the museum sector. If that’s all jargon to you, you can find out more about GLOs here:

www.artscouncil.org.uk/measuring-outcomes/generic-learning-outcomes

Knowledge and understanding

Visitors will understand ...

- What a carriage is
- The technological advances made by carriage manufacturers are an important part of the story of modern transport
- The ownership and usage of carriages reflects the social history of Georgian and Victorian Britain
- There were many roles involved in the operation of a horse-drawn carriage – who they were and what they did
- Parts of a carriage gave names to parts of modern vehicles
- The role of conservation and restoration of these vehicles

Attitudes and values

Visitors will ...

- Appreciate the skills and techniques of the craftspeople who made these carriages
- Be aware that significance of carriage history is perhaps more important than they might have originally thought
- Empathise with those who worked on the maintenance and driving of a carriage
- Be more aware of carriages as they crop up in their lives following the visit, relating their experiences back to this object
- Value the work of museums and conservators for caring for carriages and preventing deterioration

Enjoyment, inspiration and creativity

Visitors will ...

- Enjoy learning about the past, potentially through an angle they've not experienced before
- See carriages in a new light, potentially as a source of stimulus for creative work
- Have their sense of imagination about the past brought to life
- Take photographs of carriages to share on social media and other creative outputs

Skills

Visitors will ...

- Be able to identify some basic parts of a carriage and relate them to a modern vehicle
- Be able to identify some basic carriage types
- Understand more about the technical process of collections care and be able to apply this to objects in their own care

Activity, behaviour and progression

Visitors will ...

- Talk to other people about their experience of encountering a carriage in your museum
- Want to find out more about either a specific carriage or the historical/social context which surrounds it
- Want to go for a ride in a carriage
- Want to learn how to drive a carriage
- Look out for carriages when they crop up in books, film or tv and relate back to your museum and this carriage
- Look at carriages in a new light the next time they encounter one in a museum – not simply walking past, but stopping and taking notice
- Join an organisation that supports the preservation of carriages
- Be more likely to support initiatives that seek to preserve them by either volunteering, training or seeking employment in the heritage sector

The list above was the result of a workshop with carriage specialists where we discussed potential ideas about the learning outcomes carriages might be able to provide to visitors. It is by no means an exhaustive list, but we hope it will act as inspiration for you to create dynamic and ambitious learning outcomes that go beyond simply carriage type, date and materials.

Formal learning outcomes and the Curriculum

The National Curriculum contains the programmes of study and attainment targets for all subjects in maintained schools in England. The curriculum applies to core subjects (English, Maths, Science) up to key stage 4 and to foundation subjects (Art and Design, Computing, Design and Technology, Geography, History, Music and PE) up to key stage 3, after which they become optional subjects. (Languages and Citizenship also feature on the Curriculum at various points.)

The content of the National Curriculum changes over time. In recent years the Curriculum has been a subject of much debate amongst politicians, teachers and other learning professionals and is set to continue to change in the future. As such, museums and other potential venues for 'learning' (in all its forms) must keep up-to-date with where their relevance to the schemes of work lies. If museums wish to attract school visits, they need to offer content and resources that are relevant to the current curriculum.

After reviewing the current National Curriculum (live from September 2016), the following areas of study have been identified as particularly relevant to horse-drawn carriages.

Museums are used to appealing to schools in terms of providing historical content, especially in relation to curriculum areas. However, there is not much of the current history curriculum that directly relates to horse-drawn carriages. That is not to say that teachers won't be able to lead a productive visit to the museum and to look at carriages – rather it means it will be more difficult to persuade them to visit to look at these objects, rather than another museum which can tick the boxes they need to more easily.

Key Stage	Subject	Scheme of work
1	Art & Design	Pupils should be taught about the work of a range of artists, craft makers and designers, describing the differences and similarities between different practices and disciplines, and making links to their own work.
1	Design & Technology	Pupils should be taught to explore and use mechanisms [for example, levers, sliders, wheels and axles], in their products.
2	Art & Design	Pupils should be taught about great artists, architects and designers in history.
2	Design & Technology	Pupils should be taught to understand how key events and individuals in design and technology have helped shape the world.
2	History	Local history study – if your carriage is local or has a local link
3	Art & Design	Pupils should be taught about the history of art, craft, design and architecture, including periods, styles and major movements from ancient times up to the present day.
3	Design & Technology	Pupils should work in a range of domestic and local contexts and industrial contexts [for example, engineering, manufacturing, construction, food, energy, agriculture (including horticulture) and fashion]. Pupils should be taught to understand developments in design and technology, its impact on individuals, society and the environment, and the responsibilities of designers, engineers and technologists.
3	History	Ideas, political power, industry and empire: Britain, 1745-1901
3	History	Local history study – if your carriage is local or has a local link
3	Science	Physics: motion and forces

It has been suggested that being able to use the interpretative toolkit is the most fun part of interpretation. After we've thought about our audiences and what we want to communicate to them, we can select which **interpretative device** we'll use.

Many museums interpret their collections using the well-established combination of panels (large text, printed on a board and fixed to the wall) and labels (text in a smaller font size, printed in individual pieces and placed near objects). **There's nothing wrong with panels and labels** – they've been used for years and are a tried and tested method of communicating what it is we want to say. And there's the added bonus that many of our visitors understand how to use them.

It's worth remembering that there are plenty of **other interpretative devices** available for you to choose from. Some of them are fancy and costly and provide new and exciting interpretative solutions to the challenges we face when communicating with visitors. Likewise, some of them are incredibly simple, inexpensive and just as effective at communicating messages.

The suggested list here is not meant to be exhaustive, but has been compiled to serve as **inspiration for your interpretation**. Browse the list and see which of these might be right for interpreting carriages in your museum. The interpretive devices we've chosen to list here are in three groups.

Preferred interpretative devices:

These are the tried and tested interpretative elements, good at providing a way in to a carriage and at getting a message across. These tend to be comparatively straightforward and inexpensive to create and install and are accessible to most visitors.

Optional extra interpretative devices:

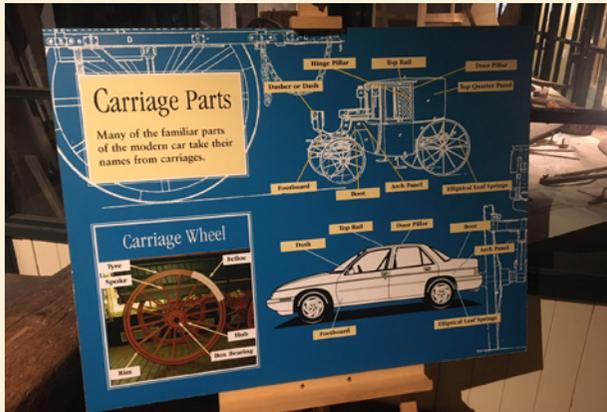
While these more creative devices can offer a visitor a way in to a carriage, they are particularly good at providing additional layers of interpretation. Some may be more complex to create and costly to install. Not all of these are applicable to all museums, but could be useful to you.

Nice to have devices:

These elements are probably not that well used, but good for you to know about. They allow for a more creative exploration of ideas, if you have the time, budget and inclination to add some flavour to your interpretation.

Preferred interpretative devices:

- Stand-up sign/lectern in front of a carriage, carrying information about one or more vehicles.
- A real-life person (guide, volunteer, explainer etc.) to interact with your visitors.
- A wall-mounted panel displaying contextual, background or overview information.
- Images and photographs to show the context a carriage existed in, or other items from the collection not able to be displayed alongside the vehicle.
- Large-print guide allowing visitors to carry the interpretation with them as they move around the space.
- Further information cards/sheets acting as a layer that allows particularly interested visitors to go further and deeper.
- A family trail (paper based) that encourages families to work together, stopping, looking, noticing and having conversations.
- Mounting interpretative content on the barrier that keeps visitors away from carriages.



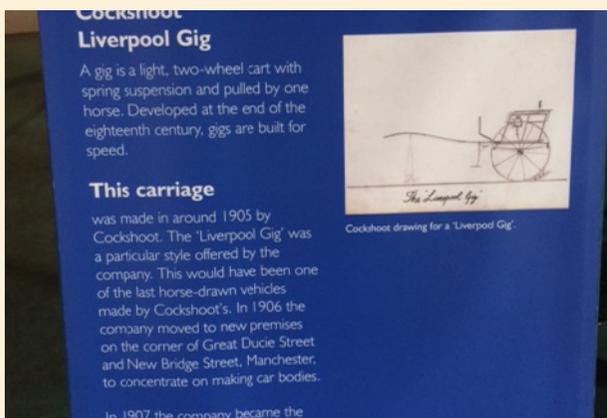
Interpretation panel showing which parts of a modern car are named after parts of a horse-drawn carriage from the Streetlife Museum of Transport, Hull



A portable stand-up sign that can be moved if need be, at Redhouse Stables, Matlock



A mobile interpretation label in a purpose-built lectern at The National Trust Carriage Museum, Arlington Court



Interpretative panel from the Museum of Science and Industry, Manchester



An introductory panel at the Staffordshire County Museum



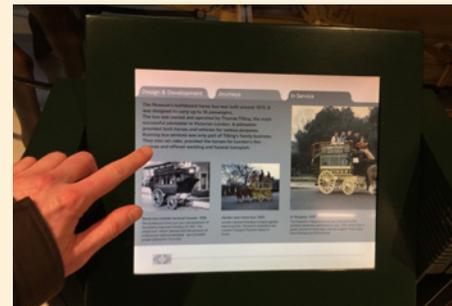
Interpretation panel at the Royal Mews, London

Optional extra interpretative devices

- Sound – projections or soundscapes played into the display space to engage visitors senses other than sight (hooves and wheels on cobbles, axles turning, horse noises, conversations between staff and passengers etc).
- Videos of the carriage moving or of it being used in a television programme or film.
- A printed guidebook or leaflet that visitors can carry around with them (potential commercial opportunity).
- Small models of carriages – many museums have these in their collections and display them alongside their larger counterparts. These offer the opportunity of showing how the carriage would have been linked up to a horse, if you don't have the space or budget to do that.
- Collage of objects relating to a carriage, such as poles, brasses, horse tack. Shown as a group and given only minimal physical interpretation, they can be visually powerful as well as informative.
- Anything that allows visitors to get a sense of what it would be like to sit in a carriage
 - sprung chairs that allow visitors to get a sense of sitting in a carriage without actually doing so
 - simulator
- Mouse trail, or other hidden little animals or trinkets for children to find. These work well at encouraging children to look under carriages.
- Hands-on interactive elements that involve simple movement
 - lift-up flaps
 - spinning and selecting answers in wooden toys
- Hands-on interactive elements that involve doing such as dressing up and horse-harnessing. These are also photo opportunities for

families, so think about whether you can have your museum's name or logo in shot in the place where they're most likely to take a picture. Good for social media.

- Hobby horses for children to play on.
- Tactile images and objects from a handling collection – especially good for visually impaired visitors.
- Torches and periscopes given to children so that they can see into the carriage interiors. (note: This needs to be supervised as it will often involve getting up close to the carriages.)



Touch screens at London Transport Museum offer a glimpse inside vehicles and show carriages in motion



Groups of objects displayed together can be effective at showing the breadth and range of collections (Redhouse Stables, Matlock)



A selection of coachbuilding tools shown together at Staffordshire County Museum. Each one displayed individually would have less impact than this collage of objects brought together in one case.

'Nice to have' devices

- Models of horses and human mannequins in situ on and around the carriages, setting it in context. Note: Don't install mannequins just for the sake of it. Unless these are done very well, they can end up looking unloved, dusty and slightly creepy. Authenticity and quality are important here. Get expert advice about clothing and harnessing.
- An installation that suggests a horse would be present, without actually showing a horse model.
- Recreating a street scene, complete with shops, dressed windows, cobbles etc. and a carriage driving down the road. Done well this can be hugely effective. Done badly, this can look terrible and is more a source of giggles among school groups than learning for anyone.
- Hanging printed banners from the ceiling above carriages allows you to experiment with height and to give the display an added dimension. A black-and-white photograph of someone driving the carriage could be hung in situ to 'people' the carriage.
- Lifesize panels showing the various people who worked in and around the carriage, perhaps with objects integrated into them.



Horses and human mannequins add character to this vehicle at London Transport Museum.



Where animal models aren't available or appropriate, horse harnesses can be displayed on mounts suggestive of horse bodies as here at the Guildhall, where the Lord Mayor's coach awaits use in the annual parade.



Where there isn't room for a full horse, just use the front legs. (Household Cavalry Museum, London)



These horses are the first object the visitor encounters as they enter the Greater Manchester Museum of Transport, complete with soundscape of street sounds.

Selecting interpretative devices

We have listed a broad range of potential devices here. Selecting which ones you will use may involve some debate and deliberation during the planning stages of your interpretation. You and your colleagues will have a range of factors to take into account when choosing which interpretative devices to deploy. Budget is always a consideration in the heritage sector, as is the amount of time and effort that will be required to create and install the interpretation. So too should be the big interpretative questions referred to earlier in this guide.

WHY are you displaying this carriage?

WHO is your audience and what do you know about them?

WHAT do you want to tell them about the carriage?

The answers to these questions will help inform which devices you end up selecting. A device has to be relevant and do a job for the visitor, not simply satisfy the needs of the museum.

Simplicity is key when it comes to interpretation, and often the most straightforward ideas work the best, for you and for visitors. That said, we hope that this guide has prompted you to think beyond the obvious when it comes to interpreting horse-drawn carriages.

Here are some common horse-drawn carriage terms you may encounter in literature.

Axle

the metal axis on which the wheels turn. Most carriages have Collinge axles, introduced in 1792.

Body

the part of the carriage which carries the driver, passengers, and luggage.

Boot

containers for luggage. Carriages may have a hind boot and front boot.

Box

the coachman's seat.

Box seat

a passenger seat next to the coachman's box, usually with a lower cushion.

Calache

a folding sunshade, named after the Caleche, a Barouche-like carriage with a hood.

Cap case

a trunk fixed to the rear of a travelling coach.

Cee-spring

a curved metal spring linked to a leather strap which suspends the body of the vehicle.

Dashboard

or Dasher, a board in front of the driver's seat to protect them from dirt.

Drag shoe

a metal shoe placed under the wheel of a coach in order to stop it rolling down a steep hill.

Drag staff

a pole attached to the underside of a coach which was allowed to drag on the ground when climbing hills. It would prevent the vehicle rolling backwards.

Elliptic springs

a form of suspension introduced in 1804. They consist of two side-springs, one curved upwards and the other downwards. They enabled vehicles to be made lighter and more elegant.

Felloe

the curved wooden sections which make up the rim of a wheel (pronounced 'felly').

Footboard

an angled board where the feet of the driver and passenger rest.

Futchell

the part of the undercarriage which supports the splinter bar, pole or shaft.

Hammer cloth

a felt cloth which covers the coachman's seat on a high status carriage, usually decorated with braid, fringes and tassels.

Hub

the central block of a wheel, also called the 'Nave'.

Imperial

a box which sits between the passenger seats on the roof of the coach. On a Park Drag it is often the lunch box.

Perch

the long bar which links the front and rear axles.

Pole

horses are harnessed either side of the pole, which is linked to the carriage by the futchell.

Postilion

the driver of a horse-drawn coach, mounted on one of the horses rather than seated on the vehicle.

Rumble seat

the seat at the back of a Road Coach or Park Drag. It usually carried two grooms or a manservant and a maid.

Shafts

two lengths of timber between which horses are harnessed. They assist with steering.

Splinter bar

a fixed bar at the front of the carriage by which it is drawn.

Spoke

wooden part of the wheel which radiates from the hub to the felloes.

Swingle tree

a wooden or metal bar which forms part of the link between the horses and the vehicle.

Telegraph springs

a form of suspension made up of four-springs, two going sideways and two crossways.

Transom

a wooden or metal piece which links the wheel plate to the body of a four-wheeled vehicle.

Tyre

iron band fixed to the outside of the wheel. Later tyres were solid or pneumatic rubber.

Undercarriage

the under part of the vehicle consisting of the wheels, axles, perch, springs and other wood and iron work on which the body sits.

Wheel plate

a circular metal plate which allows the front axle to turn.

Whip

the person who drives the horses.

Whip spring

an early form of suspension, linked to the body of the carriage by leather straps.

Horse-drawn carriages

James Arnold, *All Drawn by Horses* (David & Charles, 1979)

Arthur Ingram, *Horse-drawn vehicles since 1760* (Blandford, 1977)

Christopher Nicholson, *The National Trust Carriage Museum at Arlington Court*, in National Trust Arts, Building & Collections Bulletin 2009, 2011

D.J. Smith, *Discovering Horse-Drawn Carriages* (Shire Discovering, 2004)

Sallie Walrond, *Looking at Carriages* (J A Allen & Co, 1992)

Websites:

The Carriage Foundation:

- www.thecarriagefoundation.org.uk
-

The guide to the collections at The National Trust Carriage Museum, Arlington Court makes for good background reading:

- www.nationaltrust.org.uk/arlington-court-and-the-national-trust-carriage-museum/documents/national-trust-carriage-museum-guide-book.pdf
-

Association of Heritage Interpretation:

- www.ahi.org.uk
-

Displaying transport objects

Gaynor Kavanagh, *Making Histories in Transport Museums* (Bloomsbury, 2006)

The Association of British Transport and Engineering Museums has recently reissued Guidelines for the Care of Larger Working Historic Objects. A free downloadable version is available from their website:

- www.abtemguidelinesorg.wordpress.com
-

Hard copies can be purchased from the Collections Trust:

- www.collectionstrust.org.uk/product/guidelines-for-the-care-of-larger-and-working-historic-objects
-

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