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# Conference Report Population and Transport

## Local Population Studies Society Autumn Conference 2017

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The Local Population Studies Society held its autumn 2017 conference on 11 November 2017 at the University of Leicester, in conjunction with the Friends of the Centre for English Local History at the University of Leicester. The conference theme was ‘Population and Transport’ with papers exploring the significance of transport and communications in population movement and residential change from the seventeenth century to the twentieth. The event was jointly sponsored by the Local Population Studies Society and the Centre for English Local History, University of Leicester, and introduced and chaired by the organisers, Lyn Boothman and Kevin Schürer. There were eight research papers spread between two conference sessions, the first entitled ‘Transport routes, nodes and speeds in England and Wales 1670–1911’, and the second, ‘Places, people and industries’. This report provides a summary of each one in turn.

### **Session 1: Transport routes, nodes and speeds in England and Wales, 1670–1911**

This session consisted of four presentations, each presented by members of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure (CAMPOP).

The first paper was presented by **Leigh Shaw-Taylor**, the CAMPOP Director. It was entitled ‘Introduction to the Transport, Urbanisation and Economic Development England and Wales c. 1670–1911 project at the Cambridge Group’. Shaw-Taylor began by placing the project in the context of the Cambridge Group’s wider Occupational Structure project and showing some interesting maps of the proportion of the population employed in the secondary and tertiary sectors at different times. He noted, for example, that the transition from primary to secondary sector employment had commenced well before the beginning of the industrial revolution and that, by 1911, 12 per cent of the working population was employed in transport or related sectors, in which sectors employment

growth in the immediately preceding decades had been rivalled only by that of the mining industry. The transport project involved mapping all railways, waterways, turnpike and coastal shipping routes using Geographical Information Systems (GIS) techniques. This had been combined with work on towns and markets that had created and mapped a database of 1,700 different places which, depending on the criteria used, might be considered as towns. Criteria included possessing a market or achieving a particular population size. The urbanised area of each place at different times had also been incorporated from Ordnance Survey maps. The result was a very flexible database which could be interrogated in many ways to facilitate research into the interaction of transport and economic and social change. The intention was to make access to the database widely available, provided only that the intended use did not overlap with the Cambridge Group's own research plans.

Shaw-Taylor was followed by **Max Satchell**, a Research Associate at CAMPOP, who presented a paper entitled 'Identifying the trunk roads of early modern England and Wales'. Max began by introducing the audience to John Ogilby's *Britannia* (1675) which contained maps of 85 roads covering 7,500 miles on 100 copper plates. Satchell set out to discover whether Ogilby had included all the main roads from that period. In particular, Ogilby had at one time intended the book to have 200 plates, possibly implying an original plan to cover 15,000 miles of roads. Mapping Ogilby's roads using GIS shows a preponderance of roads oriented towards London or between other old-established towns, with the newer, growing centres neglected. Also, accounts of many contemporary coaching routes do not always accord with Ogilby. One way to address the problem was to map other data such as bed and billeting surveys, stabling numbers, other route books and known postal routes and compare this with Ogilby's volume. Satchell focussed on stabling data. He found that Ogilby's routes had a much higher density of stables, over 11 per mile compared with 1–3 per mile on other routes. The work raised a series of interesting anomalies. For instance, Fosters Booth on the London-Holyhead road (Watling Street) is insignificant today, but in the mid-seventeenth century it had stabling for 126 horses yet was only 2.5 miles from Towcester which had space for approximately 250. Closer examination of Ogilby, however, shows a crossing of a non-Ogilby road, which was an important ridgeway from the Cotswolds. Ogilby is largely an atlas of the main routes to London, with far fewer cross roads, however it has thousands of intersections with their destinations marked, which helps identify probable missing routes. More work is needed to complete this project; for example applying a metric of average number of stables per mile for each sector, an idea that came to the presenter while travelling on the train to Leicester for the conference!

The third presentation was by **Oliver Dunn**, another Research Associate at CAMPOP, entitled 'Coastal shipping and ports in England and Wales 1650–1911'. Dunn started his presentation by showing us a number of artists' depictions of coastal shipping and emphasising how little is known about coastal shipping compared to other modes of transport. His research has involved placing the coastal maritime trading routes on to CAMPOP's GIS along with associated data such as the time taken to travel the routes, the

cost, and connections to inland transport networks. Links were also made to CAMPOP's population and towns databases. One part of the paper outlined the Newcastle coal trade. Coal was shipped down the east coast of England, predominantly to London but also to smaller ports. In some cases, ships were even beached to make very localised deliveries. In the early part of the period, piracy and war were a threat to trade but this diminished once Britain had some level of maritime dominance.

Dunn focussed particularly on shipping routes in 1690, 1830 and 1911. The middle year marked the advent of steam ships and the latter the final demise of sail. Coastal shipping routes were rarely recorded contemporaneously, so he estimated them from captains' preferences with regard to depth and distance from shore. Initially 800 ports were mapped. Contemporary evidence from actual voyages was found in port customs books, which cover the period from 1565 to 1790 (35,000 voyages analysed), and crew lists of 1830–1845 (4,500 voyages). From these data, certain key indicators had been derived, including port-to-port time, customs waiting time and waiting times to unload and to sail (these last could be particularly long when waiting for propitious conditions to leave London). Miles covered per daylight day in different months of the year and the percentage of departures from London in each month of the year were other measures that he had been able to develop. The end result enables maritime travel to be considered as well as inland travel in a wide range of future investigations by the Cambridge Group and others.

The final presentation in this session was given by **Xuesheng You**, CAMPOP Research Associate, and **Eduard Alvares**, of CAMPOP and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. They presented a paper entitled 'Passenger and freight journeys around England and Wales c. 1680–1830'. Xuesheng You began the presentation by analysing railway maps. Core work had been undertaken in Spain, digitally mapping Cobb's Railway Atlas as part of a European transport network project. The Cambridge Group built upon this work in a variety of ways, including adding data on minor lines, the London underground and topology (which allowed for more directional information on junctions). The state of development of the network can now be retrieved for any year. For example, we can see that London, Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester were first linked in 1838, and that by the mid 1840s a national network existed. Twenty-five years later, there was no obvious gap in coverage anywhere in England and Wales. The paper then demonstrated how the railways influenced localised population growth.

Alvares started his portion of the presentation by reading an account of an uncomfortable experience of an outside passenger on a stage coach. This formed the basis for an examination of the changing times of travel. For example, Leicester to Northampton would have taken 26 hours in 1680, including an overnight stay. By 1830, with road improvements, this fell to 4.5 hours, and in 1911 the journey took one hour by train. The average cost per passenger, and per ton of freight, also fell dramatically. The Cambridge Group are working on a 'Journey Planner' to be launched in 2018. The average travel times for many journeys by road, water and rail have been digitised. These digitised travel times underlie the 'Journey Planner' which can be used by researchers to determine

the travel time, by land or water, between a great variety of places in the three years mentioned above. It is hoped that this will prove to be a valuable resource.

## Session 2: Places, people and industries

The morning sessions were about large-scale research projects. The first three afternoon presentations were about more detailed research on various aspects of developments in transport. **Ken Sneath** (University of Cambridge) began the afternoon with a paper entitled 'Godmanchester on the move: a study of the way transport networks and technologies affected one place over many centuries'. Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire, situated close to Huntingdon, was the site of an important Roman road junction where three routes met; Ermine Street crosses the river Ouse here. A fort was built, a mansion followed, and the settlement gradually developed into a small town with a population between 250 and 500. As was typical of such settlements, the main roads met in the middle of the fortified area. The post-Roman period saw a decline but in the early tenth century the town was developed and remodelled, and the main roads were diverted around the outside of the walls. By the time of Domesday Book the town's population was between 500 and 800, and it was growing; by the Hundred Roll of 1279 it was approximately 2,000, a total that later fell. Medieval manorial court records survive and provide the usual evidence of the care which was or was not given to the maintenance of the road system over the next several hundred years. There are frequent references to roads being impassable and to 'obstructions on the King's Highway'.

Godmanchester became a borough in 1604 and at the same time received a grant for an annual horse and cattle fair, which brought more traffic and business to the town. In 1663 an Act of Parliament gave powers to the local justices to erect toll gates on the Great North Road, a route which passed close to Godmanchester. At this period the Hearth Tax suggests a population of around 1,000. In the eighteenth century three turnpike acts directly affected the town. The eighteenth century saw national improvements in coaches, as the roads allowed faster movement, which benefitted the gentry and the middling sort across the country, as well as the improvement of freight movement by road and by navigation on the nearby River Ouse. At the height of stagecoach services, the town had four or five stagecoaches a day to London as well as a mail coach. A four mile stretch of railway from Godmanchester to St Ives opened in 1847. This was linked to the east coast main line in 1851, at a time when the population of Godmanchester was 2,337. By 1891 five per cent of the adult males in Godmanchester were working on the railway, and most of these men were born outside the immediate area. The introduction of the car not only revolutionised transport but also provided local jobs. The town had its own bus service in the 1920s and daily motor coaches from Godmanchester to London were introduced in 1935.

The next two presentations focused on the railways. **John Pullin** (University of Leicester) presented a paper entitled 'Nineteenth-century engine drivers, a case-study in

occupational and residential mobility'. Pullin's research has focused on driver mobility in a number of ways: where they came from, mobility between railway companies, and mobility on the job within the same company. Engine drivers were a group of people essential to their industry, who had a specific skill set, were fairly well paid and had a lot of occupational autonomy. They were the 'top of the pecking order' in their working group, which has led some historians to suggest they were amongst the 'labour aristocracy'. Pullin's paper focused on the period 1850–1885. At the start of this period there were around 2,500 engine drivers, by 1873 there were around 7,500 and by 1900 around 20,000. The major issues which later led to industrial disputes were long hours, pay and overtime. Detailed information about railway staff, especially non-office-based workers, survives from only a few railway companies. Pullin used the records of the London, Brighton and South Coast railway (LBSCR), for whom surveys of all employees survive from 1871, 1877 and 1881. These provide data about each employee's name, occupation, age and pay. Linking the 1871 survey with the census of the same year, he has been able to identify 197 of the 204 drivers employed by LBSCR in that year. He then traced as many as possible in earlier and later censuses. He found that in 1871 46 per cent of drivers had been born in areas served by the company and another 24 per cent were from northern England. The remainder were from the Midlands, East Anglia, south-west England and other parts of southern England. The northern drivers were on average older than those born elsewhere. There is evidence that when the railways began they specifically tried to recruit people with experience with steam engines, who were mostly working in northern areas. Later recruits were likely to be more local.

Once the railways were established a typical 'driver career' developed: working as an engine cleaner from around age 15 years, becoming a fireman (stoker) from around age 21 and moving into a job as a driver from around age 27. This pattern favoured local recruitment. There is little evidence of the movement of drivers into non-manual work. Most companies whose railways covered long distances had lodging houses for staff away from home, or for young staff whose parents had moved elsewhere on the company's network. Pullin has used the censuses and the three LBSCR surveys to look at movement within the job. He has found examples of people moving around the network of one company, sometimes for promotion to busier routes, sometimes to quieter areas. He has also used discipline books for the South Eastern Railway, which show that drivers could be reprimanded for 'virtually anything'. Mobility between companies is more difficult to track, particularly given the lack of company records, but Pullin found evidence that drivers dismissed from one railway because of an industrial dispute were recruited by another company despite their previous employers circulating a list of employees whom they had sacked. This presentation was based on research Pullin undertook for his Masters dissertation; he has recently started a PhD so there will be more to come!

**Hannah Reeves** (University of Keele and the National Railway Museum) presented significant and new research about the wider context of railway employment with a paper entitled 'One big happy family? Exploring the idea of the "railway family" in Gloucester,

1900–1948’. Her presentation, based on her doctoral research, examines the documents of women’s trade union auxiliary organisations, of which two existed in Gloucester: the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants/National Union of Railwaymen (ASRS/NUR) Railway Women’s Guild and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) Women’s Society. Gloucester had two competing railway companies; workers from both firms were concentrated in an area of the town near the stations and yards. Reeves has analysed the detailed records of members of the Railway Women’s Guild and minutes of their meetings, along with issues of magazines and newspapers. The idea of the ‘railway family’ was promoted by both the companies and the unions, although the term was more commonly used by the companies than the unions; the companies wanted to ensure the loyalty of railwaymen to their company, create a non-militant workforce and draw the families of their workers into the industry. Both railway companies in Gloucester set up social and educational facilities for their employees and their families. The NUR’s focus was on ensuring the loyalty of railwaymen through the interests of their wives and children, and their publicity used emotive language to encourage loyalty and support for the union.

The Railway Women’s Guild was founded in Gloucester in 1902. Reeves demonstrated how it offered practical financial and moral support to members in difficult times, it supported the union in times of labour unrest or industrial action and raised money for the NUR Orphans Fund and its own Widows Fund. The Gloucester branch also became involved in local and national politics, supporting causes that affected ‘the railway family’ and local women and children. The ASLEF Women’s Society was introduced in Gloucester in 1925 and was primarily concerned with fundraising for the union and organising social events, but also supported other campaigns which concerned the ‘railway family’. The Railway Women’s Guild approached the wives and adult children of new recruits to the NUR, but sometimes recruited women whose neighbours or friends were members even if their husbands or fathers were not yet union members. This issue may not have caused any problems in Gloucester but elsewhere it led to disputes. The minutes of the Guild show that members of a family or people living in one area often joined at a very similar time. The Guild could offer support when families moved to new parts of the country. It organised sick visitors and provided practical care and advice, including nourishing food (such as an egg or milk) for the sick. It also supported baby clinics for children under school age and worked closely with the Women’s Co-operative Guild. Teas and concerts were arranged to raise funds for railway orphans, but were also social occasions in themselves. Reeves has analysed the advice and support in NUR newsletters, which included information on national or international campaigns concerning maternal and infant welfare.

The final speaker, **Colin Pooley** (University of Lancaster), took us away from mechanical transport. His presentation, entitled ‘Pedestrian stories: the changing role of walking in urban mobility’, started with the fact that walking has always been one of the most common forms of mobility, and in many parts of the world still is. However in this

country and others in the ‘developed’ world, pedestrians have been pushed to the margins. Looking at the journeys people make to work, in the 1890s nearly 60 per cent were made on foot, compared to just below 8 per cent a century later. For journeys of any sort of over a mile, the National Travel Surveys data shows that in both the mid 1970s and the mid 1980s walking was the main travel mode for over a third of journeys (34.8 per cent). In the most recent survey (2016) the figure was 25.5 per cent. Walking has always, at least in the last century or so, been more common in cities than in rural areas. In light of this information, Pooley and some colleagues have been analysing qualitative data sources which record when people walked, for how long, for what purposes and how far. In particular, they are analysing narrative life histories, diaries and statements made by victims and witnesses during criminal cases at the Old Bailey in the nineteenth century. Pooley spent some time considering the problems of these sources, which include issues around recall, survival, reliability, representativeness and legibility. The key factors which have been examined so far include: transport mode choice, perceptions of normality, time pressures and perceptions of risk. One of the issues with qualitative sources is that most walking trips are mundane, and thus much less likely to be recorded. Experiences which were normal 80 years ago (and thus rarely recorded) might be seen as unusual now.

The presentation emphasised the wealth of evidence of walking in some sources. For instance, the *Proceedings of the Old Bailey* digital resource contains multiple accounts of women walking regularly, and walking over long distances. Pooley noted that the idea of going for a walk as a leisure activity did not emerge until the second half of the twentieth century. We were shown examples of references to walking (mainly non-leisure walking), dating from the early twentieth century ‘when walking was normal’ to 2010 when pedestrians were saying that they often felt unusual walking, or felt ‘second class citizens’. The change comes somewhere in the 1960s and 1970s as car ownership spread rapidly. Pooley criticised the idea that we are busier now than people used to be, so do not have the time to walk. Indeed, diaries from earlier periods illustrate people had extremely busy lives but also walked. However, perceptions of safety and risk while walking, for both men and women, may have changed in recent years. If more people are to walk regularly, these perceptions must be changed, Pooley suggested. Policy was needed make people feel more comfortable and safe walking, and perhaps also to make short journeys by car seem more difficult and anti-social.