

READING CARRIAGE SALE REPORT – MAIN RESULTS

Hundreds of people travelled to Reading for the Carriage Sale on 1st April 2026 for the live auction, and plenty more joined in by bidding remotely. But the day was tinged with sadness as the collection of the late Ben Turner went under the hammer. However, Ben's items sold well and generated a lot of interest around the whole auction.

A well-received new feature was the big screen behind auctioneer Richard Dance illustrating lots and showing the prices and bidding as he offered the 95 carriages from a fixed rostrum. This was a popular initiative which hastened the proceedings and kept up the momentum, resulting in brisk trade, good prices and a high selling percentage.

COLLECTABLES & HARNESS

The live auction started with the pictures, models and books at the 'far end' of the sundry section. From the Turner estate, a well-made scale model of a Gypsy Wagon sold for £850 (553); a Royal Mail Coach model sold for £200 (558) and a Pot Wagon model made £1,000 (559).

Next up was the harness section where some excellent prices were achieved. A set of full size Zilco harness sold for £800 (604), as did a black/patent pony set by Turner Bridgar (615).

One of the most sought after lots of the auction was a fabulous set of state pair harness originally made for the Yellow Earl, Hugh Lowther. Although the leather had deteriorated with time, the silver furniture and embellishments were in super condition. The rarity and provenance combined made this a very desirable item, and it sold for £5,500 (614).

There were several sets of harness from the Turner estate, including lot 628, a black/patent/whitemetal set which made £950, and a set of black/brass team harness with brown collars, some of which was made by Henk Van Der Wiel which sold for £3,200 (634). Six lots, 635-640, which were brown sets with collars and reins, were sold with an 'option' because they were very similar, and they were taken by the same buyer for £640 each.

From another home, a set of black leather and synthetic harness for a team by Broomells Saddlery sold for £1,000 (660) and a full size Zilco set made £700 (661).

SUNDRY SECTION

Whips were the order of the day in the sundry section, where prices for 'traditional' whips matched those paid for popular dealer's whips which have sold so well in recent years.

A silver mounted team whip by Swaine & Adeney originally from the Spencer family, Althrop Estate made £460 (707) and another with a similar description made £840 (814); a single Lawton lamp made £400 (788); two Shand Mason lanterns sold for £580 (892) and £820 (1227); a team whip by Geoff Clothier made £500 (974); a 23" black patent Huskissons collar with brass hames made £500 (1022); a dealer's whip with whalebone centre made £600 (1084); a top hat with leather box made £400 (1163); sixteen lots of Musgrave harness racks made £400 each (1208-1213) and at the end of the section, a pair of heavy, Dutch-made lamps sold for £1,000 (1319).

Meanwhile, in the saddlery section, a side saddle by George Parker of London sold for £575 (319). In the carriage parts, three London trolley axles with three stud hubs sold for £250 (227) and a set of four artillery wheels made £480 (237).

CARRIAGES

One of the most talked about items before the sale was Ben Turner's Hansom Cab, a modern take on a distinctive Victorian vehicle. Presented for sale in excellent order, it sold for £5,000 (35). The distinctive and usual High Flyer type Phaeton with the wicker seat, sometimes called the 'Shell Phaeton', sold for £4,750 (36).

The Mail Phaeton by Mendyka of Poland will be seen again in the showing after making £5,500 (37); the American Rockaway in excellent condition made £3,600 (38); the large Wagonette Break by Glinkowski of Poland, used for exercise and training a pair or team, sold for £4,200 (46) and a Continental Break which looked new, sold for £6,000 (48).

One lot which attracted a great deal of interest was the Wagonette Break, built recently in Poland, beautifully finished in red and black, with iron shod wheels and ready to be used with a smart team, sold on a phone bid for £14,000 (49). Ben's 'Falcon' Coach – another modern, Polish vehicle – with which he'd enjoyed Coaching Marathons and showing, including winning the Road Coach class at the Royal Windsor Horse Show in 2022, sold to one of his coaching friends for £20,000 (50).

Ben was passionate about the Wild West and American carriages and driving, so his two big American style Stagecoaches provoked a lot of interest from his friends. The Wells Fargo Coach sold for £9,000 (52) and the 'Deadwood' Overland Stagecoach sold for £5,000 (53). The Market Dray for heavy horses made £4,000 (56); the Military GS Wagon made £2,600 (57); another American Military Wagon made £3,100 (58) and the Chuck Wagon with canopy sold for £5,100 (59).

Another much talked about lot was the 'Mad Max Mobile' which Ben had made from a VW Beetle and it achieved £2,800 (60). The final item from the collection was the fabulous Bow Top Wagon in the style of Thomas Tong which attracted heated bidding and made the top price of the day, £41,000 (62).

Following straight on was another super Bow Top Wagon by Robert Hugg, built in the style of Bill Wright, and it sold for £27,000 (63).

The momentum and high percentage of sales kept going throughout the sale of the carriages. Two lots (80 & 82) from the same home were a Milk Float with lamps and a churn, and a London Trolley on pneumatics, which both sold for £6,500. A Road Cart by Terence Fell sold for £2,400 (85); an Open Lot Gypsy Wagon sold for £4,000 (88) and at the end of the section, an Ifor Williams horse trailer also sold for £4,000 (94).

The prices shown are the hammer prices and do not include VAT where applicable or the 15% Buyers' Premium.