

‘We’re going to move ... I can’t rush backwards and forwards, I’ll go mad – I am sure of it.’¹
Representations of speed and haste in English life writing 1846-1958.

Colin G. Pooley and Marilyn E. Pooley

Abstract

Changes in economy and society since the early nineteenth century have often been associated with the process of time-space compression, during which people felt increasingly compelled to travel faster over greater distances and to fit ever more activities into a given period of time. Unsurprisingly, such changes can also lead to increased stress and frustration. However, the impacts of this speeding-up of everyday life have rarely been explored at an individual level. In this paper we use a wide range of personal diaries from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to examine how (if at all) a sample of English diarists experienced and reacted to the processes of time-space compression in their everyday lives. Is there evidence that changes in transport, communications and work practices caused stress and frustration or rather presented new opportunities that were welcomed? Were there spatial and social differences in how people negotiated and interacted with new transport technologies, and were such reactions strongly gendered? While the period under consideration undoubtedly offered many new (and faster) forms of communication, old modes of travel also persisted. It is argued that for most people, most of the time, increased speed was welcomed, that engagement with new forms of transport was trouble-free, that older forms of mobility flourished alongside the new, and that undue stress only occurred when opportunities for mobility clashed with other demands that were placed upon an individual, or when expectations of speed were not met.

Key words

Space, Time, Speed, Mobility, Travel.

Introduction

The feeling that there is insufficient time in the day to complete all the things we consider necessary, and seeking to hurry between places and to rush tasks that might be more pleasurable (and executed more efficiently) if done more slowly, are normal human experiences. Although the need to hurry and compress many activities into a limited period of time has undoubtedly been felt by some throughout human history, it has also been argued that processes of urbanization and 'modernization' of society, economy, transport and communications – in other words the development of architectures of hurry - have increased the pace of life and led to new stresses and strains in urban living through a process of 'time-space compression'.² It is also argued that one of the key characteristics of such time-space compression is the unequal power relations that exist within society: those with the least power experience the most deleterious effects of pressure and hurry, and fail to share in the benefits of a more connected society.³ Such processes may be observed at a range of scales from the global to the local.⁴ The processes of time-space compression have been particularly associated with the development of a late-twentieth century globalized economy and society, where global inter-connectedness reduces (though does not eliminate) the constraints of time and space, but similar processes may be observed in the past as transport speeds increased and many communities became more easily connected to a wider world.⁵

In this chapter we examine the speeding up of time and space through the eyes of selected travellers who lived in Britain during the century after 1840. While accounts of changes in transport technology, urban structure and work-place regimes are relatively common and of long standing,⁶ there are far fewer accounts of how such shifts in economy and society were experienced by travellers. Although the scope of our investigation is necessarily limited by the sources available, we assess the ways in which past travellers engaged with new and faster transport technologies, the situations that created stress when travelling and the role of time-space compression in producing such feelings. We also examine selectively the experiences of men and women of different classes and in varied parts of the country, together with any evidence for change over the period studied. Most of our diarists lived for at least part of the recorded time in urban areas, and all travelled to and interacted with towns and cities. We argue that by the mid-nineteenth century rural and urban areas were already closely connected, and that new architectures of travel and hurry which had developed first in urban areas could have an impact on the lives of most travellers wherever they lived. Evidence is partial and cannot be deemed conclusive, but it does provide pointers to the ways in which past processes of time-space compression were experienced by individual travellers in Britain.

Anyone living in Britain from the 1850s to the 1930s would have seen massive changes in the transport available to them, although the extent to which this could be accessed varied by location, social class and gender. In mid-century the principal means of travelling from place to place were by road (on foot, on horseback, by cart or by carriage); by water (on inland canals and rivers or on coastal steamers); or increasingly by rail, which by 1850 connected most major towns and cities, although smaller communities in rural areas were for the most part not linked in to the national rail network until much later in the century. During their lifetime they would have witnessed urban transport transformed by the development of first steam and then electric trams, and towards the

end of their life would have witnessed the expansion of travel by bicycle, motor bus and private car. In the early twentieth century vehicles powered by horses, humans and motors all vied with each other for space on the streets of Britain's towns and cities.⁷ Transport history is often presented as a linear story with new developments (such as motor cars) displacing older forms of transport. However, in practice old technologies and means of travelling usually persisted alongside the new, and many people remained excluded from access to the fastest and most modern technologies and infrastructures.⁸ In this chapter we seek to examine how selected informants engaged with this changing transport landscape in the century after 1840.

The analysis we present is informed by contemporary mobility theories as developed initially by Mimi Sheller and John Urry,⁹ and subsequently refined by many scholars.¹⁰ We draw especially on the following five characteristics that are central to much research on mobility. First, the assertion that mobility in all its forms (of people, goods and ideas) is so embedded in everyday life that it is a major factor that shapes society, economy and culture rather than being a product of it. Second, the belief that for an individual traveller mobility has meanings that extend well beyond the simple act of moving from one place to another: the journey itself has significance and meaning. Third, the suggestion that experiences and, especially, expectations of mobility have changed over time so that assumptions of speed and relatively unrestrained movement became strongly embedded within most societies by the late-twentieth century. Fourth, the way that mobility research has focused on the impacts and influences of new sites of mobility such as international airports or motorway service stations. Finally, and most crucially, the ways in which human movement is experienced by an individual and the impacts that it has on their everyday life. In this chapter we seek to utilise some of these concepts in an historical context.

Using life writing to study mobility

Contemporary mobility research is often conducted through the use of in-depth interviews, accompanied journeys and travel ethnographies, thus constructing a detailed picture of the ways in which people engage with everyday travel.¹¹ Clearly this is not possible in an historical context but, by using life writing, especially diaries or letters written contemporaneously, it is possible to gain some insights into the ways in which everyday travel was experienced. Life histories and autobiographies, though usually more readily available, are more problematic in that they were mostly constructed long after the events recorded and thus may be particularly influenced by the distortion of memories over time.¹² Much the same is true for oral histories that may be used for the more recent past.¹³ For these reasons in this chapter we focus only on diaries written, so far as we are aware, on an almost daily basis. A selection of nine diaries is used, drawn from some 50 items of life writing that we have studied so far. Brief details of the diarists are given in Table 1, and further contextual information is provided in the text.

Table 1: The diaries

Name of diarist	Occupation	Date of birth	Location during diary	Dates of diary	Location of source
John Leeson	House proprietor	1803	London	1846-1865	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/8)
John Lee	Apprentice draper	1842	Lancashire	1859-1864	Private collection
James Bennetts Williams	Tin/copper mine worker	1856	Cornwall and Liverpool, then South America	1883-1887	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/57)
Mary Anne Prout	None. Limited domestic duties.	1861	Cornwall	1882	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/58)
Ida Berry	None. Limited domestic duties.	1884	Manchester	1902-1907	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/28)
Freda Smith	None	1887	London, Oxfordshire, Northumberland and elsewhere.	1904-1914	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/99)
Gerald Gray Fitzmaurice	Lawyer	1901	London and elsewhere	1926-1927	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/52)
Annie Rudolph (Rudoff)	Art school and assists in father's shop + domestic duties	1905	London	1923 (+later summary)	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/31)
Gillian Caldwell	School, college, assists in parents' hotel, foreign travel agent and secretarial work.	1937	Eskdale (Cumbria), Zurich and Edinburgh	1952-1958	Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/1)

Diaries are, of course, not without their difficulties of interpretation, and these have mostly been well rehearsed elsewhere.¹⁴ By definition diaries were written only by those with sufficient leisure time and literacy, many were destroyed later in life, and there are no ways of knowing what criteria (if any) were used in decisions to write or retain a diary. Similarly, we do not know what diarists omitted from their record of daily events, but it is reasonable to assume that unusual events were recorded more often than the mundane. This is a problem for the investigation of everyday travel, as much of this was indeed repetitive and mundane in nature. Diaries appear to be kept more often by women than by men (men were more likely to write autobiographies), and are most common for

adolescent girls and young women. It is thus likely that the demographic profile of the authors of surviving diaries is skewed. In our research we have avoided using diaries of the rich and famous that may have been written with a view to future publication, but have concentrated on those written, so far as we can tell, with no thought to any future readership. Analysis of any life writing is time consuming. Most diaries consulted were hand written manuscripts, often hard to read and very slow to transcribe. However, there is no substitute for the careful reading of each diary, recording those items relevant to the research in hand while also building a contextual picture of the life and times of each diarist.

Reactions to new and faster forms of transport

When viewed from the perspective of an individual traveller, newness is a relative concept structured by age, gender, social group and location. The fact that a form of transport existed does not mean that an individual traveller had access to it. Thus someone growing up in a remote rural area in Britain might have been aware of the development of the railway network, but may not actually have travelled on a train until later in life when they moved to a larger community with rail connections. Even if a form of transport was in theory available, it does not mean that it was used by all: in Britain motor cars remained the preserve of the wealthy during the first half of the twentieth century, and most people, though seeing cars on the road, would have travelled rarely if ever in a private motor vehicle. Access to different forms of transport could also be strongly gendered as both bicycles and motor cars were much more likely to be available to, and used by, men than women. Social norms and societal constraints meant that many women did not use some of the fastest and most convenient forms of transport as quickly or easily as their male counterparts. Reactions to new forms of transport could also vary with age and previous experience with, for instance, the way in which someone in their 80s reacted to and engaged with the coming of the railway quite possibly different from that of a younger contemporary who had grown up during the development of rail travel. Though there is clear evidence of variations in travel mode by factors such as age and gender in the twentieth century,¹⁵ there is little direct information on how and when individual travellers encountered and engaged with different forms of transport. Although clearly highly selective and limited in scope, life writing can provide one avenue through which these themes may be explored at an individual level for periods prior to the present or recent past when oral and survey data may be utilised.

All the diarists whose travel has been analysed for this chapter made some use of railway travel. Although it did not supplant all older means of travel (for instance by boat, on foot or by horse power), it did provide a fast and convenient means of travelling over longer distances which appeared to be enthusiastically embraced by those who encountered it. This was the case for diarists living in both urban and rural areas (although those living in the countryside usually had to undertake a longer journey by other means to reach the nearest railway station), for both men and women, and for diarists of all ages and at all times from the 1850s to the 1950s. From its early development travel by train appeared to be welcomed, with appreciation of its speed and convenience and few concerns about either its impact on the environment or any risks from travelling on the railway.

John Lee was born in 1842 and kept a surviving diary from 1859 to 1864. He lived initially in North-East Lancashire and then on Merseyside, working as a draper's assistant. In common with most life writing his diary probably does not record all his everyday journeys, but it is clear that the railway was his normal means of travel whenever he moved outside his local area. As he grew up he would have seen the railway network develop in East Lancashire, and travelling by train around Lancashire and across the Pennines to Yorkshire was a regular feature of his diary, with on average about seven such journeys recorded explicitly each year. Most such travel was related to leisure, longer work-related travel or visits to relatives, but all journeys appeared unremarkable and were recorded in a matter-of-fact way that suggested that they were a routine part of his everyday life. The following two extracts from 1860 are typical: 'Went by the first train to Burnley to get some of my school books &c out of my large box...';¹⁶ '... walking, visiting friends, then train to Skipton, to Burnley for agricultural show'.¹⁷ John Leeson (born 1803) was much older than Lee and, as a house proprietor in London, lived a much more affluent life style in the capital. However, despite these differences of age, social class and location, his diary (kept 1846-1865) shows an equally comfortable relationship with the railway. Leeson was a young man, living at home with his parents in London, when the rail network first developed. He would have already established a pattern of travel, and would have had to adjust himself to this new and faster means of transport. However, by the 1840s travel by train was established as a normal part of life for himself and his family for trips outside of London, mostly to visit relatives in Norwich and for leisure travel. In 1847 he even noted that his 76 year old mother travelled by train (probably for the first time) to visit family in Norwich, commenting specifically that she enjoyed the experience. Two extracts again illustrate the matter-of-fact way in which travel by train for leisure and family visits was recorded: 'Left London and I went by Railway from Euston Square to Derby and Ambergate, Matlock, to Buxton, got there at 5';¹⁸ 'Left London with Mrs Leeson and went by Eastern Union Railway to Norwich, very foggy'.¹⁹ These examples from the mid-nineteenth century suggest that travel by train was quickly adopted by people of different ages and social backgrounds, living in very different parts of the country. Unsurprisingly, later diarists were equally comfortable with rail travel when it provided the most convenient option.

From the late-nineteenth century the bicycle could provide quick and convenient travel over relatively short distances, and it could be used as a substitute for walking (where it had the advantage of speed) or public transport (where its main advantages were privacy and flexibility). Before the 1920s bicycles were too expensive for most families on low incomes, and cycling was mainly undertaken by the middle classes (and above) for leisure purposes.²⁰ Although cycle use was greater among men than women, our diary evidence supports other studies that show that that from the late-nineteenth century many young women also cycled and enjoyed the speed and independence that it gave.²¹ Ida Berry (born 1884) lived in south Manchester and kept a surviving diary from 1902 to 1907. She and her sister were keen cyclists, going out most weeks in summer and regularly undertaking rides of some 15 km, with occasional longer rides of up to 80 km. Almost all such trips were for leisure. Cycling had multiple attractions for Ida and her sister: they enjoyed the exercise and fresh air, revelled in the speed they could attain on downhill stretches, often (though not always) had the company of male friends, sometimes interrupted the ride with a walk, and frequently incorporated tea and cakes at a convenient café into their excursions. Two extracts from Ida's diary of 1906 illustrate these points: 'Glorious day, just like summer. We brought the bicycles down and went for a lovely ride through Cheadle, Gatley and Northenden';²² 'Maud and I cycled to

Alderley Edge after tea, it was a glorious ride we scorched home.²³ Cycling seemed to give Ida and her sister a degree of freedom that they may not have gained so easily elsewhere at that period.

Freda Smith (born 1887), whose surviving diaries date from 1904 to 1914, lived with her parents in London but frequently stayed with her paternal grandmother and aunts at Britwell Salome in rural Oxfordshire. For Freda, cycling (always with a relative or other chaperone) provided a convenient and speedy means of transport in the countryside as well as a source of exercise, allowing her to socialise with family friends or to access services in larger settlements within a radius of about eight km of Britwell House, although she also walked or was driven (by carriage or car) to such locations at other times. Freda cycled in all seasons; for example, in February 1904 she wrote: 'M and I bicycled to Watlington in a great hurry to buy goloshes for this afternoon's hockey as the lawn was very soft.'²⁴ Occasionally Freda undertook longer cycle rides for leisure purposes (though nowhere near as long as some undertaken by Ida Berry). In August 1904, having bought a new bicycle in London, she 'was seized by a sudden desire to spend Sunday at Windsor'; she and Aunt G travelled from Britwell to Windsor: '...then bicycled by Datchet, Old Windsor and in the Park' before staying the night at the White Hart; next day they 'bicycled to Virginia Water. Lovely ride through the Park...well worth the total of 10 ½ miles.'²⁵ In both instances there is the suggestion that these journeys were undertaken on an impulse, and that any hurry was as much about the process of decision making as it was about the journey itself.

Engagement with private motor cars was much rarer for our diarists during the early years of motoring: even those from relatively affluent families rarely travelled by car, none drove regularly themselves and so relied on other family members or friends if they were to travel by car. In common with bicycle use, in the early decades of the twentieth century in Britain cars were used mainly for leisure activities. Drivers and passengers revelled in the kinaesthetic feelings of speed that could be achieved on the open road once early restrictions were lifted, and the private motor car opened up new horizons and destinations for leisure and pleasure travel. They were also often associated with romance. Travel by car did not have to have a purpose: going for a ride was itself sufficient reason to drive.²⁶ For instance, while staying at some family friends' house party at Neasham Hall, near Darlington, in 1907, Freda Smith and a group of other young adults 'suddenly at 4.26...motored off to Harrogate in his car (William Cox's) a perfect Siddeley. I never had such a ripping run ... 30 in abt 1 ¼ hours. Tea at the Majestic. Left H. 6.30 home at 8.'²⁷ By then Freda had been sufficiently interested in cars and driving to have had a 'Motor lesson' while staying at another house party in Burton-on-Trent earlier that week, and by 1907 travel in the cars of Freda's older relatives, or of her contemporaries, was a frequent and normal means of transport for her to and from social events, both in rural areas and in London.

There has been a formal age restriction on driving in Britain since the 1930s,²⁸ and driving a motor vehicle is the only form of private transport that is restricted in this way. This means that there is a constant flow of fresh generations of young people for whom the experience of driving is new. In this case engagement with the new is unrelated to when the technology was introduced, but is controlled by the age at which someone is legally allowed to engage with it (although once cars became common most young people would have experienced motoring as a passenger and some would have driven informally before they were legally able to take a test). For much of the twentieth century access to a private motor vehicle has been especially important in rural areas because public transport options were more limited than in towns, and this is well illustrated in the diary of Gillian

Caldwell (born 1937) who grew up in the remote valley of Eskdale in the English Lake District. Gillian was 15 years of age when the diary began in January 1952, but aged 17 she left home to work (briefly) in Zurich and then more permanently in Edinburgh. Although Gillian had a number of transport options in Eskdale at this time, including a narrow gauge, mainly tourist, railway and buses that could connect (often poorly) with the national rail network, her father (who ran a hotel and restaurant) had a car, and whenever possible Gillian persuaded either her father or various male friends with cars to provide her with lifts. By this stage access to a car for everyday travel was increasingly viewed as essential in a remote rural environment such as Eskdale, though it was still largely a male preserve. Nonetheless, the car also retained a strong leisure and romantic association for Gillian and her friends, with feelings of freedom and speed clearly associated with pleasure and excitement. When at home in Eskdale, Gillian and her (mainly) male friends regularly drove out to local beauty spots such as Wastwater, taking a plentiful supply of alcohol, to sit by the lake chatting and drinking. For instance, in July 1955 Gillian was back in Eskdale for the weekend and described a day touring in the Lakes, with plentiful stops at inns along the way, finished off as follows: '... we dropped into Eskdale just in time for dinner. Pa ... packed us off to Wastwater with some booze at midnight.'²⁹

There is only one recorded instance (also in 1955 when Gillian was home from Edinburgh) when she drove, somewhat reluctantly and certainly illegally, but it again illustrates the continued association of motoring with pleasure and romance at a time, and in a location, where travel by car had also become important for more mundane everyday transport (though this event could also be interpreted as a dominant male irresponsibly placing his female companion in a potentially dangerous situation):

Norman, who had had a skin full of brandy invited Pooh [female friend] and I to go over Hard Knott with him. It was a magnificent sight – never have I seen it looking more forbidding & threatening. Coming down he said he was tired of driving so gave the wheel to me and down the pass I drove! Extremely amusing and several motorists were scared off the road. ... I was terrified of coming across a policeman!³⁰

While in Edinburgh Gillian also had male friends with access to cars which were used almost entirely for pleasure: most everyday travel was on foot or by public transport. In 1957 Gillian had a regular boyfriend, but was tempted also to go out with another young man whose attractions included a smart and fast car. It seems he tried to impress Gillian with the speed of his driving, though this very nearly led to serious consequences:

What a surprise. Just after breakfast the doorbell rang and there was KEN MARSH plus supersonic new green sports car – an A.C. Great fun. ... Ken and I drove out to Duleton and spent the afternoon on the beach. What a fascinating rogue he is. I wish I had no morals! We drove back at high speed and were stopped by the police outside Portobello for speeding. They were very decent and let us off.³¹

Flying is the fastest form of transport, but air travel remained restricted to a very small elite (and those in the air force) before the 1950s, and in Britain it did not become a form of mass travel until the 1980s.³² However, long before this air travel could be particularly alluring. Gerald Gray Fitzmaurice (born 1901) was a young London lawyer and in 1927 visited an air pageant at Hendon. In his diary he recorded detailed information about different planes and wrote: 'It was an excellent

show & makes me long to fly.'³³ Gillian Caldwell also enthused about a visit to Heathrow airport in 1953, and the following year Gillian herself experienced flying. As she had left school, and at the time was without work, her father arranged for her to go to Zurich to work for a few months for an English travel agent. She flew from Manchester (Ringway) airport on a '60 seat Swiss Constellation' and clearly enjoyed the experience, although she seemed to be as interested in the airport procedures as she was in the flight itself with apparently little awareness of the speed at which she would have been travelling: 'I thoroughly enjoyed the flight and never noticed the take-off, though when we were coming in to land you could feel the plane losing height'.³⁴

At all times from the 1840s to the 1950s people have been engaging with new and (for them) faster forms of transport. However, at the same time it is important to remember that many everyday journeys continued to be undertaken by the oldest and slowest means of transport (walking), that travel was often multi-mode with travel by train often preceded by a walk or a bus ride to the station, and that horse-drawn vehicles continued to compete for road space with motor vehicles for several decades in the twentieth century. In many rural areas walking to access public transport was a necessity. For instance, the diary of Mary Anne Prout, written in 1882 when she lived in a small village near Truro in Cornwall, frequently recorded the comings and goings of relatives and visitors, who almost always had to walk several kilometres from the nearest railway station: 'Mr Henwood left about dinner time. Mrs Mitchel from Hayle came in just before he left she walked from Scorrier station this afternoon.'³⁵ Rural bus services in the 1920s could also be slow and unreliable as recorded by Gerald Fitzmaurice when he was travelling in the south-west of England: 'Annie and I left Charmouth together by the 8.55 bus to Axminster. It stopped so often en route that it undoubtedly would have missed the train if the train itself hadn't been half an hour late.'³⁶ While in some instances speed and new forms of transport (bikes and cars) were associated with leisure and romance, the diaries contain just as many instances where it was the slow and leisurely experience of walking (especially at night) that was crucial to courting and romance, as in this extract from the diary of Ida Berry: 'It was a beautiful 'starlight' night and Norman took me for a walk through Spath Road etc. and behind the 'Park'. As we were coming down Northen Grove we saw a large 'Comet' fall from the sky, it looked lovely, just like a large rocket.'³⁷

At the start of this section we suggested that newness (with regard to transport) is a relative concept. It is clear from the diary extracts that speed is also a relative concept. It depends very much on what transport speeds have been encountered before and what one's expectations are. It also varies with physical exposure to the environment and the kinaesthetic experience of speed. Thus, on a bicycle, with wind in one's face and little protection from the elements, feelings of speed can be intense (as reported by Ida Berry). Much the same would be true in an early open-top car or on a motorbike. In a more enclosed space feelings of speed are diminished, although in a car or on a train sensations of speed can be generated by watching the outside world flash by. In contrast, although flying is by far the fastest form of transport, sensations of speed are minimized due to the passengers' insulation from the outside world and the lack of external markers against which to judge speed. The lack of personal control in a plane or on a train may also lessen perceptions of speed compared to travelling by car where the driver has personal control (though the experience of a passenger may be subtly different). This section has focused on how travellers engaged with new (and potentially faster) forms of transport, and on the feelings and emotions sometimes associated with such journeys. However, it has ignored the main practical advantage of speed: the need to get somewhere in a hurry.

The production of haste and stress in everyday travel

Hurry is almost always conditional on context: the need to travel more quickly than usual from one place to another is usually generated by external circumstances, often not in a traveller's control. Thus a journey for which a traveller might initially have allocated ample time becomes rushed because of transport delays elsewhere in the system; family commitments might delay departure thus leading to the need to hurry; or over-commitment might create a context in which it feels necessary to hurry all the time. Haste is thus often produced by circumstances independent of the transport mode available; hurried journeys can take place on foot, by bike, on public transport or in motor cars, and have occurred to some extent in all time periods. The title quote used for this chapter is taken from the diary of Annie Rudolph, a young woman who lived with her family in London in the 1920s, and it illustrates well the way in which changed family circumstances could create pressures that necessitated an unwelcome need to hurry. Annie was 17 at the time of writing and had previously lived a fairly carefree existence attending college part-time and working with her father in their East End shop. However, following her mother's death all this changed and, as the oldest daughter at home, she was expected to take responsibility for running the home and caring for her younger siblings while continuing to work in the shop (her father relied on her to do most of the paperwork associated with the business). The journey from her home to the shop was about 5.6 km. and was usually undertaken by tram. It could not be speeded up and the changed circumstances meant that this became intolerable; she always felt rushed and unable to fulfil any of her duties properly, leading to her father's decision to move back to the East End. In the end they did not move as Annie's younger sister took on some of the load, but clearly for a while the journey was becoming intolerable and created significant additional stress in already difficult circumstances.

While Annie's over-commitment and consequential need to rush from place to place was generated by family circumstances beyond their control, in other instances speed could be necessitated by the inefficiencies of the individual involved or of family and friends. Oversleeping before a journey, or simply neglecting to appreciate the length of time a journey might take, could produce considerable stress and the need to rush. This could occur in all time periods and across all social groups. John Lee travelled regularly by train and usually caught his preferred train without difficulty. However, there were some occasions on which he left insufficient time for the journey from home to the station, leading to the need to rush, not always successfully, as shown in the following example: 'Got up to go by the six o'clock train to Ripon, but I was about five minutes too late. I fortunately got to ride in a dray.'³⁸ His inability to catch the train, despite no doubt rushing, led to him having to travel by much older and slower means. Almost a century later, and with rather different transport options available, Gillian Caldwell also found herself rushing to catch a train, due to the failure of the person she was relying on for a lift to the station to be ready on time. Living in a rural area with limited connections for her journey to Edinburgh she persuaded another friend to drive to the station at great speed: 'Up early and Pooh [female friend] and I were all ready to go by 10 but Charlie certainly wasn't and by 10.15 I was getting worried so we piled into Ray's Morgan & he drove at a maniacal speed all the way to the station. We just made it. We were late into Edinburgh and thoroughly cheesed off.'³⁹ In this instance, having rushed for the train, the subsequent delay on the journey appears to have been especially frustrating. One final example comes from the diary of Annie Rudolph in 1923. She was travelling (alone) by train from her home in north London to stay with friends in Berkshire, and was expecting to meet her elder sister who would accompany her across London. When her sister failed to turn up, Annie was forced to complete the journey unaided and at

great speed to just make the train on time. She concluded her detailed account with the words: 'Gee what a rush I was so puffed.'⁴⁰ Such situations are largely independent of the transport infrastructure itself.

Of course, there were also occasions where the need to rush between connections (or to wait a long period for another) were due to delays in transport caused either by technical failures or adverse weather,⁴¹ but for the most part urban travel as reported by the diarists was relatively unproblematic; for instance, Ida Berry easily moved around Manchester in the first decade of the twentieth century, and used a mixture of different transport systems which seemed to connect easily with each other and which rarely necessitated haste. One example from 1905 is typical: 'After dinner we all went by train to Chorlton, and then walked to Stretford and then we got on the top of the bus, and went to Urmston ... Coming home we had a cab from Stretford station to Chorlton station and caught the three minutes to seven train home.'⁴² Waiting for transport is rarely explicitly mentioned as a problem in the diaries, though there must have been occasions when this occurred and, no doubt, caused frustration.

One source of occasional annoyance with the rail network was the way in which the lack of integrated ticketing, and the use of sometimes quite distant stations by different railway companies serving the same community, could necessitate hurried movement from one part of a settlement to another in order to complete a journey. It has been suggested that this was one of the major inefficiencies of the Victorian railway system produced by the duplication of routes and competition between companies.⁴³ For instance, James Bennetts Williams's diary of 1883 gives an account of a journey by train from Cornwall to Liverpool, prior to sailing to South America where he worked for four years. He met up with a small group of other Cornish men, presumably all driven to seek work overseas as a result of decline in the Cornish mining industry,⁴⁴ and noted that one had to change his ticket to travel with the group, presumably because the rail company he booked with specified a different route: 'Left St Agnes about 6 a.m. got to Truro about 7 and found several Boys who were going on to the same place. Charlie Batten came on to Truro from Chacewater Station and changed his ticket at Truro.'⁴⁵ On a train journey from Bristol to Charmouth, Gerald Fitzmaurice also complained about the complications of his change of trains at Yeovil: 'At Yeovil I had to take a taxi and go for 2 ½ miles across country to get to the Junction, the Southern Station (the other was GWR).'⁴⁶

In the early years of motoring (in theory a fast form of transport), breakdowns were common and might necessitate a change of plans. After a dinner with friends in London prior to going to a dance in Banstead, Surrey, Gerald Fitzmaurice was 'greeted with the news that the car wouldn't function, or rather, its lights wouldn't. After attempts to hire a car and/or get a taxi to take us, it ended by our going on John Arthur's motor bike...he driving, Cecily in the side car and myself on the pillion, a cold night and a bumpy road and some 12 to 15 miles.'⁴⁷ Freda Smith's diary of 20 years earlier also makes frequent mention of car breakdowns: for example, 'Mother, U.W. and A.G. picked me up [at the station] and we started off. Beastly thing broke down. We had to walk [a] bit of the way home.'⁴⁸ In many of these examples it was the difficulty of completing a journey – or the lack of speed – that was an issue rather than the need for haste itself.

Conclusion

Caution must be exercised in drawing conclusions from the analysis of just nine diaries drawn from a wide range of times and places, although these are a subset of some 50 items of life writing that so far have been consulted. They are not a source that can lead easily to generalizations. Rather, they should be seen as a collection of individual accounts that collectively shed some light on the experience of everyday travel in the past. It is certain that not all journeys were recorded in the same degree of detail, or indeed recorded at all, and it is likely that unusual events figure more prominently in these first-hand accounts than mundane trips. However, we suggest that the analysis of life writing does provide some original insights into the experience of travel, and sheds light on the ways in which people engaged with increasingly speedy and complicated transport options in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain. We also argue that there are some themes that appear to be quite consistent over space and time. First, for most travellers from the 1840s to the 1950s, whatever their gender, location (urban or rural) or social background, everyday journeys were completed easily and seamlessly: travel was not something that the diarists saw as a problem and it was a routine part of their everyday life. Second, although the diarists were clearly aware of new and faster forms of transport, they did not always access them or deem them to be the most appropriate. For a wide range of reasons including cost, convenience, accessibility and preference, older and slower forms of transport flourished alongside new technologies. Most architectures of travel – be they fast or slow – usually met the expectations of the diarists studied. Third, speed itself seems to have been valued as much for the kinaesthetic experience of travelling fast, especially in modes where the travellers were exposed to the elements, as it was for the ability to get somewhere quickly. Speed was not only convenient: it was also fun. Fourth, the need to hurry was most often generated by human failings and external circumstances, and was independent of the transport mode used and of its speed of travel, although even those not particularly seeking speed could become frustrated when things did not work smoothly. Finally, the individual accounts studied emphasise clearly the variety of human experiences and reactions to travel: no two journeys are ever precisely the same. They also remind us of the relative nature of both novelty and speed because individual reactions to new and faster transport systems depended necessarily on both previous individual experiences and the expectations of travel that individuals had formed.

Notes

¹ . Diary of Annie Rudolph (Rudoff) May 27 1923. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/31).

² . Anthony Townsend, "Life in the real-time city: mobile telephones and urban metabolism," *Journal of urban technology* 7 (2000): 85-104; Barney Warf, *Time-space compression: Historical geographies* (London: Routledge, 2008); Peter Kivisto, "Time-space compression," in *The Wiley-Blackwell encyclopedia of globalization*, ed. George Ritzer (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

³ . Doreen Massey, "Power-geometry and a progressive sense of place," in *Mapping the futures: local cultures, global change*, ed. Jon Bird, Barry Curtis, Tim Putnam, George Robertson and Lisa Tickner (London: Routledge, 1993), 59-69; Gary Bridge, "Mapping the terrain of time—space compression: power networks in everyday life," *Environment and planning D: Society and Space* 15 (1997): 611-626.

⁴ . Roland Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-space and homogeneity-heterogeneity," in *Global modernities*, ed. Michael Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson (London: Sage, 1995), 25-44; John Agnew, "The new global economy: time-space compression, geopolitics, and global uneven development," *Journal of world-systems research* 7 (2001): 133-154.

⁵ . Jeremy Stein, "Reflections on time, time-space compression and technology in the nineteenth century," in *Timespace: Geographies of temporality*, ed. Jon. May and Nigel Thrift (London: Routledge, 2001), 106-119; Warf, *Time-space compression*.

⁶ . See for example Theodore Barker and Christopher Savage, *An economic history of transport in Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 1959); Harold James Dyos and Derek Aldcroft, eds. *British transport: an economic survey from the seventeenth century to the twentieth* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969); Brian Robson, *Urban growth: an approach* (London: Routledge, 1973); Patrick Joyce, *Work, society and politics: the culture of the factory in later Victorian England* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1980).

⁷ . Dyos and Aldcroft. *British transport*; Jack Simmons, *The railways of Britain: an historical introduction* (London: Macmillan, 1968); Michael Freeman and Derek Aldcroft, eds. *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Sean O'Connell, *The car and British society: class, gender and motoring, 1896-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998); John Armstrong, "From Shillibeer to Buchanan: Transport and the urban environment," in *The Cambridge urban history of Britain 1840-1950*, ed. Martin Daunton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 229-260; David Horton, Paul Rosen and Peter Cox, eds. *Cycling and society* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007); Gijs Mom, *Atlantic automobilism: emergence and persistence of the car, 1895-1940* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2014)

⁸ . David Edgerton, *Shock of the old: technology and global history since 1900* (London: Profile books, 2006). See also Mackintosh in this volume.

⁹ . Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "The new mobilities paradigm," *Environment and planning A* 38 (2006): 207-226.

¹⁰ . For overviews see for example: Tim Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern western world* (New York: Routledge, 2006); John Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007); Peter Merriman, *Mobility, space and culture* (London: Routledge, 2012); Peter Adey, David Bissell, Kevin Hannam, Peter Merriman and Mimi Sheller, *The Routledge handbook of mobilities* (London: Routledge, 2014); James Faulconbridge and Alison Hui, "Traces of a mobile field: ten years of mobilities research," *Mobilities* 11 (2016): 1-14; Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "Mobilizing the new mobilities paradigm," *Applied mobilities* 1 (2016): 10-25.

¹¹ . Benjamin Fincham, Mark McGuinness and Leslie Murray, *Mobile methodologies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009); Monika Büscher, John Urry and Katian Witchger, eds. *Mobile methods* (London: Routledge, 2010).

¹² . Jane Humphries, *Childhood and child labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 12-48; Emma Griffin, *Liberty's dawn. A people's history of the industrial revolution* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2013).

¹³ . Paul Thompson, *The voice of the past: oral history* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The oral history reader* (London: Routledge, 3rd edition 2016).

-
- ¹⁴ . Robert Fothergill, *Private chronicles: a study of English diaries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); Phippe Lejeune, *On diary* (Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009); Colin Pooley and Marilyn Pooley, "Mrs Harvey came home from Norwich... her pocket picked at the station and all her money stolen," *Journal of migration history* 1 (2015): 54-74.
- ¹⁵ . Colin Pooley, Jean Turnbull and Mags Adams, *A mobile century? Changes in everyday mobility in Britain in the twentieth century* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2005).
- ¹⁶ . Diary of John Lee, April 1 1860, authors' collection.
- ¹⁷ . Diary of John Lee, August 29 1860, authors' collection.
- ¹⁸ . Diary of John Leeson, August 2 1849. Bishopsgate Institute archive, London (GDP/8).
- ¹⁹ . Diary of John Leeson, December 23 1850. Bishopsgate Institute archive, London (GDP/8).
- ²⁰ . Horton et.al. *Cycling and society*.
- ²¹ . Philip Mackintosh and Glen Norcliffe, "Men, women and the bicycle: gender and social geography of cycling in the late nineteenth-century," in *Cycling and society*, ed. David Horton, Paul Rosen and Peter Cox (Farnham: Ashgate, 2007), 153-177; Philip Mackintosh and Glen Norcliffe, "Flaneurie on bicycles: Acquiescence to women in public in the 1890s," *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe Canadien* 50, (2006): 17-37. See also Dando in this volume.
- ²² . Diary of Ida Berry, April 11 1906. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/28).
- ²³ . Diary of Ida Berry, August 8 1906. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/28).
- ²⁴ . Diary of Freda Smith, February 18 1904. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/99).
- ²⁵ . Diary of Freda Smith, August 6 1904. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/99).
- ²⁶ . O'Connell *The car and British society*; Lynne Pearce, *Drivetime: literary excursions in automotive consciousness* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016).
- ²⁷ . Diary of Freda Smith, August 10 1907. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/99).
- ²⁸ . History of road safety, the highway code and the driving test:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/history-of-road-safety-and-the-driving-test/history-of-road-safety-the-highway-code-and-the-driving-test> (accessed October 7 2016).
- ²⁹ . Diary of Gillian Caldwell, July 9 1955. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/1).
- ³⁰ . Diary of Gillian Caldwell, April 10 1955. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/1).
- ³¹ . Diary of Gillian Caldwell, August 4 1957. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/1).
- ³² . Peter Lyth and Marc Dierikx, "From privilege to popularity: the growth of leisure air travel since 1945," *The journal of transport history* 15 (1994): 97-116; Peter Lyth, "Plane crazy Brits:

aeromobility, climate change and the British traveller," in *Transport policy: learning lessons from history*, ed. Colin Divall, Julian Hine and Colin Pooley (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 171-184.

- ³³ . Diary of Gerald Gray Fitzmaurice, July 2 1927. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/52).
- ³⁴ . Diary of Gillian Caldwell, February 17 1954. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/1).
- ³⁵ . Diary of Mary Anne Prout, May 8 1882. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/58).
- ³⁶ . Diary of Gerald Gray Fitzmaurice, June 28 1926. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/52).
- ³⁷ . Diary of Ida Berry, February 26 1905. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/28).
- ³⁸ . Diary of John Lee, August 25 1859, authors' collection.
- ³⁹ . Diary of Gillian Caldwell, April 12 1955. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/1).
- ⁴⁰ . Diary of Annie Rudolph, August 15 1923. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/31).
- ⁴¹ . Colin Pooley, "Uncertain mobilities: a view from the past," *Transfers* 3 (2013): 26-44.
- ⁴² . Diary of Ida Berry, May 10 1905. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/28).
- ⁴³ . Mark Casson, *The world's first railway system: enterprise, competition, and regulation on the railway network in Victorian Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- ⁴⁴ . Allen Buckley, *The Cornish mining industry: a brief history* (Redruth: Tor Mark Press, 1992).
- ⁴⁵ . Diary of James Bennetts Williams, September 24 1883. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/57).
- ⁴⁶ . Diary of Gerald Gray Fitzmaurice, June 27 1926. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/52).
- ⁴⁷ . Diary of Gerald Gray Fitzmaurice, January 8 1926. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/52).
- ⁴⁸ . Diary of Freda Smith, July 9 1906. Bishopsgate Institute archive (GDP/99).