

## **What Betty did: charting everyday activity over the life course**

**Colin G Pooley**

Lancaster Environment Centre and Centre for Mobilities Research (CeMoRe)

Lancaster University

Lancaster

LA14YQ

UK

[c.pooley@lancaster.ac.uk](mailto:c.pooley@lancaster.ac.uk)

+44 1524 811606

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6155-2541>

## **Abstract**

For most of the time everyday life is composed of a variety of mundane activities that go almost unnoticed and unrecorded. Many of these will follow a regular rhythm or routine that may vary over the life course as personal and family circumstances change. They may also change over a weekly or seasonal cycle. Although individually such activities could be viewed as trivial, collectively these routines and rhythms construct the fabric of all societies, economies and communities. Studying everyday life in the past is hard because few sources record mundane activities in their entirety or over a whole life span. In this paper the diaries of one woman who lived in north Lancashire (UK) from 1928 to 2018 are analysed to chart the changing rhythms and routines of everyday activities over her life course. She began writing a diary at the age of 13 and completed a detailed daily account of her activities every year until shortly before her death. By sampling the extensive run of diaries, I identify the ways in which her activities changed over her life course, and how they fluctuated over weekly and seasonal cycles. I identify seven key life-course stages during which her commitments to employment, housework, caring and leisure activities varied in response to her changing circumstances. The paper uses both quantitative and qualitative evidence from the diaries to illustrate a rarely seen aspect of change over the life course, and relates this evidence to theories of everyday life, including Lefebvre's work on 'rhythmanalysis'.

**Key words:** Everyday; activities; life course; diaries; rhythmanalysis; routine.

**Total word count:** 10,872.

## **What Betty did: charting everyday activity over the life course**

### **Introduction**

Routines and rhythms are important features of everyday life. For most people, for most of the time, time-space allocation follows an established pattern. We get up at a regular hour, we eat and go to school or work, we allocate times for household chores and for entertainment, we repeatedly visit familiar places, and we have regular hours for sleep. Such routines are usually only interrupted by factors such as personal illness, external disruption,<sup>1</sup> or holidays and other special occasions that allow us to vary a routine that is largely determined by external economic demands (such as work), social demands (such as parental responsibilities), and biological controls (such as the need to eat or sleep). The role of routine in everyday life has been theorised extensively, particularly through the influential work of Henri Lefebvre (2004) on what he calls ‘Rhythmanalysis’, and in later examples of the application and extension of his theories (Edensor, 2010a, 2010b; Simpson, 2012; Lyon, 2018; Reid-Musson, 2018). Tim Edensor (2010) identifies four key components of everyday rhythms: the repetitive actions of people as they go about their everyday lives; bodily rhythms that determine (for instance) when we eat or sleep; rhythms of mobility that create regular flows of people through space; and the rhythms of nature (such as seasonal change) with which we interact. For the most part these are deeply embedded patterns of behaviour that usually require little thought. Only when these rhythms are disrupted do we have to adjust our daily lives and construct new routines (Adey and Anderson, 2011; Marsden et al., 2020). Rhythmanalysis has its roots in a variety of earlier research that recognized the significance of routine in everyday life. Torsten Hägerstrand (1970, 1975) undertook innovative work on time geographies, which included the analysis of space-time pathways

and the role of routine in everyday actions; and Michel de Certeau (1984) highlighted the significance of routine practices (such as walking, eating, talking) in his influential work on *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

These theories are used as a framework for the research presented in this paper but, rather than focus on contemporary society (as the studies cited above largely do), I take a long view to examine the ways in which the rhythms and routines of everyday life varied and changed over the life course of one woman who lived through much of the twentieth century. The paper thus combines historical and sociological perspectives to illuminate the ways in which everyday activities changed over the life course (Erikson, 1970; Goldthorpe, 1991). Key questions to be investigated include: what routines were established; how and why did they form; to what extent did these routines change over the life course; and how did personal and external disruptions alter these routines at particular stages of the life course. Many factors are involved. Routines are likely to change in response to key milestones during an individual life: starting or leaving school; beginning work or changing employment; moving home; marriage (or cohabiting with a partner); caring responsibilities for children or elderly relatives; retirement; illness and disability. There are also likely to be temporal changes that alter everyday routines but also have their own rhythms that may vary in regular cycles over a week, a month or as the seasons turn over a year. For instance, weekend activities may differ markedly from those on weekdays, and the summer months may generate more outdoor activities than are undertaken during winter. Location can also be important. Urban areas may offer different opportunities compared to rural areas, and thus may generate quite different routines. Moving from one location to another may not only mean adjusting to new patterns of work or shopping, but also may offer different possibilities for everyday activities, thus establishing new routines that were not previously considered. In this paper I examine these themes using both quantitative and qualitative evidence drawn from a long run of personal

diaries. The female author lived in north Lancashire (UK) from 1928 to 2018, and she kept a detailed personal daily diary every year from the age of 13 until shortly before her death.

### **Historical approaches to the study of everyday life**

It is hard to access detailed information on routine everyday activities in the past. Gaining such data over a long time span to monitor change during the life course is even more difficult. Because most everyday activity is routine, it is rarely recorded in surviving documents. It is much more likely that the historical record will focus on unusual or exceptional events, thus potentially skewing our view of past lives and experiences.<sup>2</sup>

However, there are some ways in which such data can be accessed. One fruitful source is the information collected in the Mass Observation Archive (University of Sussex, 2015). The Mass Observation social research organization was established in 1937 with the aim of collecting detailed personal data about everyday life in Britain. It ran until c1950 before being absorbed into a market research company, but the data collection was restarted in a new form in 1981 as the Mass Observation Project based at the University of Sussex (Summerfield, 1985; Sheridan, 1993; Hubble, 2005). From 1937 Mass Observation recruited a panel of respondents to answer questionnaires about their activities and to record diaries of their daily life, and a team of paid investigators visited various locations to record conversations and behaviours in different settings. These data, together with the later material collected from a panel of respondents and related personal papers, form an invaluable resource and have been utilised in a range of academic studies of everyday life in Britain (Gurney, 1997; Cross, 2005; Savage, 2007; Hinton, 2010; Gazeley and Langhamer, 2013; Langhamer, 2016; Kushner, 2017). However, Mass Observation data pose two problems for an analysis of the ways in which everyday activities changed over the life course. First, most individuals only kept diaries for a relatively short portion of their life and, second, the diaries were written in the knowledge that they would be read by others. It is quite likely that this

knowledge could censor what was written in comparison to personal diaries that were never meant to be read by anyone other than the author.

Some longitudinal panel data can provide insights into changes over the life course but most such surveys cover only a limited time period and often focus on quite a narrow range of topics (UK Data Service, 2020). For instance, the UK Household Longitudinal Study Understanding Society (University of Essex, n.d), only began in its current form in 2009, although its precursor, the British Household Panel Survey (University of Essex, n.d.), ran from 1991 to 2008. The longest-running longitudinal surveys in the UK are the MRC National Survey of Health and Development (1946 cohort), the 1958 National Child Development Study and the 1970 British Cohort Study (University College London, n.d.; Elliott and Shepherd, 2006; Medical Research Council, 2020). These surveys follow the lives of a particular cohort, and although they initially focused mainly on health data have since broadened in scope to include a wider range of economic and social information. Although such panel and survey data are not designed to record detailed information on all everyday activities, they do provide valuable time-series data that can be analysed quantitatively to reveal social and economic patterns and trends over time. Pearson (2016) provides an overview of these projects and they have generated many research papers (for instance, Matel et al., 2018; Berrington, 2020; Bialowolski and Weziak-Bialowolska, 2020; Longhi, 2020). Similar longitudinal data and publications exist in a number of other countries (Baxter et al., 2008; Tsai, 2010; Rees and Sabia, 2010; van Beijsterveldt, 2013).

Life histories for the relatively recent past can be collected using oral history techniques (Summerfield, 1998; Giles, 2002; Ritchie, 2014; Perks, 2015; Gluck and Patai, 2016; Abrams, 2016; Thompson, 2017), but this may not be ideal for the collection of information on routine everyday events as these are easily forgotten. Respondents may recall more unusual aspects of their lives and, unwittingly, prioritise these over those aspects that were

routine and taken for granted. Specific aspects of twentieth-century everyday life have been examined using a range of sources including the popular press, women's magazines and personal accounts (Langhamer, 2007; Tinkler and Krasnick Warsh, 2008; Braybon and Summerfield, 2012), while some studies of aging have explored how everyday life can change with increasing age, especially in the context of loneliness (Laslett, 1984; Bengtson et al., 2012; Snell, 2017; Vincent, 2020). Diaries, autobiographies and life histories can also provide valuable details of everyday activities. The character and purpose of self-writing has changed over time, and personal accounts of various kinds have been used quite extensively in historical research (Smyth, 2008; Humphries, 2010; Pooley and Pooley, 2010; Delap, 2011; Griffin, 2013; Moran, 2015; Ezell, 2016; Pooley, 2017). However, it is rare for surviving personal diaries to span a long enough time period to cover a full life course, and the limitations of diary evidence are well known: their survival is sporadic; few diaries survive for the poorest members of society; women (especially young women) were more likely to write diaries than were men; and there is no way of knowing what was omitted from a personal record (Fothergill, 1974; Nussbaum, 1988; Sherman, 2005; Hewitt, 2006; Summerfield, 2019). Although the diaries used in this paper are very detailed and cover most of a life span, all the problems normally associated with the use of diaries for historical research still apply.

### **The diarist and the diaries**

Betty was born on an upland farm in north Lancashire in 1928. Her only sibling died when young, so she was effectively an only child. At the age of 13 (in January 1942) she began writing a diary and continued to do so every year until shortly before her death in November 2018.<sup>3</sup> This provides an unusually long run of personal diaries which allow analysis of changes in Betty's everyday life over almost her entire life course. An interview with Betty in June 2018 also filled in some details of her earlier life.<sup>4</sup> Betty's diaries were meticulously

completed every day, and record almost all her everyday activities. Of course, there may have been some things omitted, but her record leaves little time for any significant additional activities. She began writing a diary because her schoolteacher encouraged her to keep practicing her handwriting after she left school; early diaries were in old school exercise books, but she quickly changed to yearly pocket diaries and later to larger-format diaries that provided more space. The entries are mostly quite factual, with only rare glimpses of feelings or emotions and the nature of the entries changed little over time. She appeared to write her diary every day, usually in the evening, and this routine appeared to be maintained whatever other activities she was undertaking. For the purposes of this paper this is quite helpful, but the lack of personal introspection is also frustrating as the reader gets little sense of what Betty felt about her life and experiences. Betty's life was relatively stable, and her mobility was limited. She never married (or had children) and lived with her parents until their deaths. For the first ten years of the diary Betty was (briefly) at school and then worked on the family farm contributing to all forms of housework and some farming duties.<sup>5</sup> However, in October 1952 her parents gave up farming (largely due to old age) and the family moved to a semi-detached house in a village some 3km south of the small Lancashire town of Garstang. This semi-suburban location was quite different from the remote upland farm on which she had previously lived, and at the age of 24 Betty had to go out to work for the first time. She had a variety of different types of employment, initially cleaning in the homes of people locally, then working on a chicken farm (packing eggs) and in the offices of various local businesses including oil delivery, farm machinery and textiles. Although the family were not wealthy, they never seemed especially short of money. Betty's mother died in 1969, and her father in 1977 after a long period of illness. Caring for her elderly father took up a large amount of her time, and her parents' deaths quite fundamentally altered her life, but she remained (alone) in the same house until she went into a care home shortly before she died. Betty retired

promptly at the age of 60 (in 1988), and she remained active until her mid-80s when she was increasingly restricted by poor health and immobility. For much of her life Betty only travelled locally (most of her relatives and friends lived close by), but after retirement her horizons widened, and in most years she took couriered holidays in Britain and overseas. As a young woman almost all her travel was on foot, by bike or bus, but in 1958 she passed her driving test, and in 1964 bought her own car (rather than using her father's car). Thereafter she drove for almost all her activities, but she still rarely went more than 30km from home. For the most part her spatial horizons were limited and her everyday activities routine, but not unlike many women of her generation whose everyday lives were focused around housework, paid employment, caregiving and (mainly) female friendships.

For the purposes of the analysis presented in this paper, it was necessary to sample the run of diaries.<sup>6</sup> 15 time slices were taken at 5-year intervals from 1945 to 2015, thus providing coverage over most of Betty's life course. For each of these years the first full week of each month was selected, and all activities mentioned on these days were recorded, day by day, in a database. 21 different types of activity were identified, and the final database consisted of entries for 3,549 separate activities spread over 1,260 days. This allowed simple quantitative analysis of the pattern of Betty's daily activity, supplemented with qualitative textual data from the diary to provide more detail and context. All data extraction and recording were done manually as there is not a digital record of the diary and, given the varied nature of entries, it would have been hard to extract relevant information using computer text analysis software (Gregory et al., 2015a, 2015b). The database records only the number of times that an activity was recorded in the diary (on a day by day basis) and does not record duration. The only activity for which Betty regularly provided any information about duration was her work, usually stating her daily working hours, but for other activities such as housework or needlework there is no indication of precise duration beyond generalised statements such as

‘morning’ or evening’. For some outings an approximate duration may be calculated because the times she left home and returned are stated, but this is not consistent. Thus, any discussion of Betty’s daily time allocation must remain generalised. The quantitative analysis of qualitative data can be controversial (Morgan, 1993; Benoit, 2018). Counting the number of occurrences in a text, whether a diary, newspaper or other source, clearly removes the event from its context and may be misleading. However, to examine change over time (Betty’s entire life course), it was felt that simple counting of the number of activities undertaken each day was a valuable indicator. By supplementing this with textual data, the bare numbers can be contextualised and related to the main phases of Betty’s life. For the purposes of analysis, I identify seven key life-course phases, each with their distinctive pattern of everyday activities.<sup>7</sup> These are detailed in the next section.

Information drawn from one individual diarist cannot be used to make generalisations about any larger population and, in some ways, Betty was possibly statistically atypical of females of her generation. She never married or had children whereas approximately only 15 per cent of women born in England and Wales in the late 1920s remained childless (Office for National Statistics, 2016). In 1981, when Betty would have been 53 years of age, some 81 per cent of all women in north-west England age 50-54 were married, and only 4.9 per cent of households were headed by a single female (Office for National Statistics, 1981; Holden, 2007).<sup>8</sup> However, in many other respects Betty’s life was not unusual, and she went through much the same life course stages as most other women of her generation. She left school and started work (initially as little more than a child), first on the farm where she lived and then elsewhere; she took on increased household duties as her mother’s health deteriorated, and she spent a lengthy period caring for her father; following his death she gained more freedom, especially after she retired when she had time to widen her range of activities; and in extreme old age she was increasingly limited by ill-health. The precise causes and timings may be

different from women of her generation who married and had children, but a pattern of increased housework, caring responsibilities for children and parents, followed by increased freedom later in life prior to the onset of ill-health, would be familiar to many.

### **Changing rhythms and routines over the life course**

Most adults have some activities (such as paid employment) that are necessary or non-discretionary, others (such as hobbies or leisure pursuits) that are undertaken entirely at the discretion of the individual, and many more (such as shopping) that combine elements of necessity and pleasure (Bhat and Misra, 1999; Meloni et al., 2004; Chiappori and Lewbel, 2015).<sup>9</sup> The ways in which activities are viewed may also vary from person to person or change over time. For instance, for some people attendance at a religious service may be something that is discretionary, undertaken only occasionally or not at all; for others with a strong faith church attendance may be viewed as an absolute necessity and take precedence over other activities. An individual may view church as an essential part of their life at one stage of the life course but lose their faith and the desire to go to church at another stage (Azzi and Ehrenberg, 1975). Betty's life contained a mix of such activities; many followed regular rhythms, but others waxed and waned over her life course.

Table 1 summarises the ways in which Betty's everyday activities varied over the 15 years sampled from her teenage and adult life course. Over Betty's entire adult life course, the two activities that she recorded most frequently and regularly were various types of sewing, tapestry and other needlecraft,<sup>10</sup> together with housework of all kinds. These were followed in their frequency by visits to relatives and friends who lived nearby and by paid employment.<sup>11</sup> However, the relative importance of these and other activities varied markedly over Betty's life course. This is summarised more clearly in table 2, where Betty's life course

is divided into the seven stages mentioned above. Boxes 1 and 2 also provide a series of brief extracts from the diary illustrating activities typical of each life stage.

[Tables 1 and 2 about here]

## **Box 1: Activity change over the seven stages of Betty's life course (stages 1-4)**

### **Stage 1: Living and working on family farm (age 13 -24).**

#### **Friday 6th July 1945 (age 17)**

Got up at 8.45 and caught the 9.30 bus at the top, caught the 11.30 bus for Chipping, had my dinner at Chip Shop, walked home and called at R's, got home at 4. Mother was clearing up, so I finished it off for her. At night took some Brides Cake to R's, and then went to J's, and I were'nt [sic] there long as she was busy. GB came, Went to bed 10.45.

#### **Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> July 1945 (age 17)**

Baked, bread, pie and cakes. Dad went to Grandads for an oil stove oven and fetched Grandad and Granny back for the day. BS landed on his weeks holiday, to help us to hay-time and we havent [sic] started. At night Dad and I took Grandad back then went to bed.

### **Stage 2: Living with both parents in Catterall and working locally (age 24-41).**

#### **Friday 1<sup>st</sup> July 1960 (age 32)**

DJ [work] 7.15 to 5.30. Washed the clothes. Washed my hair. Washed windows. Had a bath.

#### **Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 1960 (age 32)**

Stock-taking, DJ [work] 7.30 to 12.30. Mr DH called. I went to Garstang alone after dinner. Night we went to B's Farm, they were just finishing hay-timeing [sic]. Home 11 o'clock.

### **Stage 3: Living in Catterall with father after mother died, working locally but had short period of unemployment (age 41-43)).**

#### **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1970 (age 42)**

Restless night. Got up at 8.40. Washed. The Dr came this morning [to father]. Cleaned up downstairs and hovered [sic] the stairs. P came twice. Miss H came and Mrs B. I had to go to Garstang at 5 o'clock for a prescription, was not away long. Nice day.

#### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July 1970 (age 42)**

Had a good nights [sic] sleep. Both Dad and I got up once. Did odd jobs. Picked blackcurrants. Cleaned upstairs. C and E came. P and M called after the walk round Barnacre and Claughton on the St Helens sponsored [sic] walk. Washed my hair and had a bath. Mr G shaved Dad. Rain in morning then fine afternoon.

### **Stage 4: Living in Catterall, working and caring for increasingly ill father (age 43-49).**

#### **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 1975 (age 47)**

L.F.S. [work] 8.30 to 5pm. Dad went to the Beeches [day care centre]. Put the washer on. Cleaned up in the living-room, hall, kitchen. Ironed. Smashing day.

#### **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July 1975 (age 47)**

Got up at 8.30 am. Put the washer on. Painted with gloss the outside of kitchen window. Painted the oil tank with undercoat. Gardened. Ironed. Dad and I had a bath. Smashing day.

Source: Diaries of Betty, 1942-2018.

All spelling and grammatical errors have been retained. The layout has been changed to make entries more compact.

## **Box 2: Activity change over the seven stages of Betty's life course (stages 5-7))**

### **Stage 5: Living alone in Catterall and working locally (age 49-60).**

#### **Friday 4<sup>th</sup> July 1980 (age 52)**

Lappet Mill [work] 7.30 to 4.30pm. Had fish and chips and chocolate cake. Got home at 4.45, changed my clothes. Put the washer on. Went to Garstang to the bank, Booths, and Discount Foods. Saw Lily (T) outside "Booths". Got back home at 6pm. Pegged the clothes, got them dry, and ironed.

Picked the blackcurrants, washed clean, and put them in the freezer. Wet morning, then got fair, nice afternoon.

#### **Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> July 1980 (age 52)**

Got up at 8am. Washed my hair. Dusted round. Got ready and went to Garstang, to see what was left at 'Caster' decorators [sic], who are selling out, then I went to Fulwood to I's, we went at 2pm to Broughton School, to the Crowning of the Rose Queen and the Garden Party, went back to I's for tea. Sat talked and knitted. I left at 10.45pm after a lovely day. Slow morning after wet overnight, nice afternoon and evening.

### **Stage 6: Living alone in Catterall after retirement (age 60-c85).**

#### **Friday 7<sup>th</sup> July 2000 (age 72)**

Up at 7.45am. Had a shower, washed my hair. Washed, pegged outside. Dusted the living-room and hall. Ironed. J called. Took out the Church Magazines. J.D. took J.C. L.B. and I to P's Coffee Evening, for the Patronal Flowers, at 7.30pm. J and I look after the raffle, we were sat in the porch. Home 9.45. Bright, light breeze, lovely evening, went cooler.

#### **Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 2000 (age 72)**

Up at 8am. D came at 9am and mended the car, he left at 10.30am. I hovered [sic] the hall and living room. I went to Rogers for petrol, the Sunday School for the milk left on Thursday, and Farm Shop for fruit and vegetables. Home 11.30am. Dusted and hovered [sic] the sitting room. Picked Gooseberries and Blackcurrants, cleaned, washed (stewed the Gooseberries) and froze. I went for the papers. J.P. and L.M. rang. Worked on the Red Stole, and knitting. Bed 9.45pm. Cloudy, fair, no sun.

### **Stage 7: Living alone in Catterall, increasingly immobile and dependent on day care (age c85-90).**

#### **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2015 (age 87)**

Bad night. Up at 7.30am. Had a good wash. Anne came. Washed, pegged outside. Anne got the washing in for me. Ironed (3) items. About 11am, M.P.'s man came and fixed my two large hot plates on the cooker. Crocheted the Gray/Brick Knee wrap. Bed 10pm. Bright, warm, cloudy, light sunshine.

#### **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2015 (age 87)**

Good night. Up at 8.15. Anne came. Watched cooking on TV, James Martin. District Nurse came at six o'clock (she lives near Garstang baths). Crocheted the the G/B Knee wrap. Bed 10pm. Cloudy, breezy. Brightened up, lovely evening.

Source: Diaries of Betty, 1942-2018.

All spelling and grammatical errors have been retained. The layout has been changed to make entries more compact.

As a teenager and young adult living at home on the family farm, Betty's life was totally dominated by a wide range of household duties that represented her contribution to the family economy. These occurred almost three times as frequently as any other activities, the most important of which were visiting friends, going to other social activities (such as Young Farmers' events), and sewing. Much the same routine persisted when Betty and her parents moved away from the farm, although paid work outside the home replaced the domestic role she fulfilled previously. She still contributed to housework but sewing and visiting friends remained important. Other social activities declined, possibly because in moving she had lost some of the contacts and opportunities that had previously existed. Betty's routine did change somewhat following the death of her mother. Although regular paid employment still dominated, the amount of housework that Betty undertook increased markedly as she took on full responsibility for all household chores.<sup>12</sup> In consequence, her principal hobby – sewing – declined markedly in importance as she had less discretionary time, although visits to relatives increased a little, probably as she sought support from those she knew and loved. The other significant change in this period was Betty's church attendance. When living on the farm she hardly ever attended church, but from 1960 onwards she began to go regularly to Sunday services and by the 1970s often went more than once a week. The rhythm of regular church attendance had become an important part of Betty's life and provided a strong framework of social connections that were important to her as her position and responsibilities in the household changed.

By 1975 Betty's life and routine had changed markedly. Her father's health declined slowly but by this stage he clearly had quite advanced dementia (though a diagnosis is never explicitly mentioned in the diary). He could not safely be left alone and attended a day-care centre while Betty was working, although sometimes he managed to wander off from there and Betty had to be called from work to retrieve him. This placed massive demands on

Betty's time and, apart from paid employment, almost all her time was spent on housework and caring for her father in the home. The frequency with which she visited friends or relatives fell markedly, and many of these trips were to take her father to a close relative's house to be cared for while she undertook other essential activities such as shopping. She had access to a telephone in the house from 1968 and this was used extensively to keep in touch with relatives and friends and to arrange care for her father. She had few outings and almost stopped going to church. She did continue to sew though at a reduced level compared to when both her parents were alive. Various forms of needlecraft were a constant element in her life, and this was clearly something that she found relaxing and rewarding, and which could easily be fitted in around other activities. For instance, a weekend outing might consist of a drive to the coast where she would sit and watch the waves while knitting or sewing. Betty's father died in 1977 following quite a long spell in hospital, and Betty quickly settled into a new routine of living alone. The rhythm of her paid employment continued much as before, but she spent less time on housework and much more time on outings and social activities. Her church attendance also increased markedly, with many of her social engagements church related. This also interacted with her sewing as she embroidered tapestry for the local church.

Betty retired in 1988 and for the next 25 years or so she used her freedom from the routine of work to live a very full and active life. For the most part she did not take on new activities, but rather spent more time on the things she had done previously. Overall, her most frequent activity during this period was her needlework, followed by housework. This was now done much less frequently than when her father was alive as, presumably, there would have been much less to do. In common with other British households Betty also acquired new labour-saving household appliances which may have reduced the time she needed to devote to such activities (Bowden and Offer, 1994; Vanek, 2012). The remainder of her time was used to

visit friends and relatives, and for other social activities. Almost all her regular contacts were very local, though she did maintain regular contact by letter with a woman in Canada with whom she had been paired as a pen-pal while at school. They met briefly on a few occasions when her friend visited the UK. Betty never travelled to Canada. She also did much more shopping which appeared to become a leisure activity rather than simply a necessity. The church continued to play a key role in her life with attendance every Sunday and often on a Wednesday. During this period Betty also began to take regular holidays away from home, although these did not occur sufficiently frequently to be visible in the quantitative analysis. Holidays were almost always couriered trips by coach to various UK destinations and, once a year (usually in February), by charter flight to a Mediterranean resort in locations such as Tunisia or Spain. She always travelled with the same group of close friends and in many ways replicated the routines she had at home but in a warm coastal environment. In the final phase of Betty's life course her mobility and activities were greatly restricted by ill-health. Most activities were sedentary and were dominated by her needlecraft which continued to be of great importance. For the first time in her life she recorded watching a substantial amount of television (mostly cookery programmes), and she continued to do some household chores though she now also had daily help. Her main travel outside the home was for frequent visits to the health centre together with a small amount of shopping and some social activities. For these trips she was almost always accompanied by a younger relative. Church attendance dropped right away as did visits to friends or other outings. Her life had acquired a new and much simpler rhythm in keeping with the physical limitations of old age that she encountered.

While many of Betty's activities followed a more-or-less constant routine throughout the year – for instance paid employment and housework went on regardless – other activities varied from day to day and with the seasons. These changes are mostly predictable and are

summarised in Tables 3 and 4. The frequency with which Betty undertook indoor activities such as sewing and reading tended to be higher in the winter months than in the summer when visits and outings were more common. Housework and decorating increased a little in the spring as Betty undertook extensive spring cleaning, and attendance at needlecraft classes was mostly clustered in the spring and autumn when the classes ran. Weekly routines were equally predictable. Betty mostly worked a five-day week with only occasional weekend work; housework and baking tended to peak towards the end of the week on Fridays and Saturdays, but she did relatively little on Sunday when she frequently went to church. Shopping also increased towards the end of the week, and visits to friends and relatives increased at the weekend, especially on Sundays. However, other social activities more often took place during the week, and sewing was an almost constant presence in Betty's life. This routine changed only slightly after retirement, but activities such as visiting friends and shopping did become more evenly spaced during the week.

[Tables 3 and 4 about here]

So far this analysis has only counted the frequency with which activities occurred, and not the amount of time that Betty allocated to each activity. As outlined above, this is difficult because Betty did not consistently record time allocation, but some rough calculations can be made. Betty mostly worked an eight-hour day and a five-day week. On this basis Betty allocated approximately 11 per cent of her total time (almost 17 per cent of her waking life) to employment during her adult life course.<sup>13</sup> If we focus only on the years during which Betty had paid employment outside the home, some 36 per cent of her waking life was allocated to work. However, this still meant that almost two thirds of Betty's waking life could be allocated to her housework and discretionary activities such as sewing, visiting friends and attending social events. Moreover, when Betty was relatively young, it was not uncommon for her to sleep for much less than the eight hours a night allocated in the above

calculation. What is particularly clear from the diary is that Betty was an extremely active woman. She always kept herself busy, and she filled every moment with some activity or another.<sup>14</sup> The extracts in Boxes 1 and 2 give a flavour of how she filled her time with a variety of activities. Only in later life did she seem to slow down a little: she slept for longer at night and spent much more time on sedentary activities, but even towards the end of her life she was rarely idle. Maintaining the routines and rhythms that had been present throughout her life was clearly important for her, even in old age.

### **Concluding discussion: contextualising an ordinary life<sup>15</sup>**

The activities that Betty undertook over her life course were in many ways both predictable and mundane. But, as others have argued (in a variety of different contexts), the mundane is important (Kane, 2001; Newman and Dale, 2009; Enloe, 2011). Betty was a very ordinary woman, and her activities were totally unremarkable. But it is exactly these sorts of activities, carried out every day by ordinary men and women everywhere, that create and maintain local economies, societies and communities. Betty worked, she shopped, she played an active role in her local church and other organizations, and she maintained contact with a strong network of relations and friends within her local area. Such often overlooked everyday activities are what bind people and places together and create the social and economic environment in which we live. The importance of routine in everyday life has been recognized in many studies, and housework – most often undertaken by women – is frequently referred to in these terms (Felson and Spaeth, 1978; Coltrane, 1989, 2000; Highmore, 2004; Tang, 2012). Betty spent a large part of her life doing home-based work of various kinds, both through necessary household chores and through her life-long commitment to needlecraft. But she also filled her day with many other activities that created their own rhythms and routines: church, meetings of the Women's Institute, shopping, visits to relatives and, of course, work. Historical research on women's lives in the mid-twentieth century often focuses particularly on the

ways in which women became increasingly engaged with the labour market and found new roles outside the home, thus giving themselves extra agency and economic independence while still negotiating most domestic duties (Braybon and Summerfield, 1987; Alexander, 1995; Summerfield, 1998; Giles, 2002; Thomson, 2013). As she was the main or only wage earner in her household for most of her life, Betty had to take paid employment, but she also had to combine this with all the domestic roles that most women carried out. Many psychological studies have emphasised the importance of individual agency, or locus of control, in personal welfare (Lefcourt and Davidson-Katz, 1991; Wu et al., 2015). The ability to make your own decisions and have at least some control over your life is important. Betty appeared to have a high degree of individual agency throughout her life, although it is not possible to say to what extent she felt controlled by her parents while they were alive, or by other societal constraints. As her parents aged, she took control of most household affairs and she lived alone for much of her remaining life. One must assume that the activities she undertook (in addition to those necessary for survival) were those that by-and-large she chose to do. The routines that Betty established, and largely kept to throughout her life apart from when they were disrupted by events beyond her control (such as her father's long illness) or by life course changes (such as retirement), provided a structure within which Betty could live both comfortably and confidently.<sup>16</sup>

The diary tells us a great deal about what Betty did, but relatively little about what she thought or felt. Emotions only appear in the diary in exceptional circumstances, such as after the deaths of her parents (particularly her father to whom she was especially close), occasionally at work when routines changed, and in old age when she became increasingly frustrated by her immobility. Otherwise, based on her diary entries, Betty's life appeared to sail on smoothly and without emotional upsets or concerns. Even the Second World War seemed to make little difference to her rural routine.<sup>17</sup> The degree to which this fully reflected

Betty's character, or simply reflects a reticence (or inability) to express emotions in words, is impossible to tell. However, the impression given by Betty's diary writing, or at least the one that she chose to portray, is that she was a woman who just got on with life, and who was rarely deflected from her usual calm and ordered daily routines. It seems reasonable to conclude that Betty was content with her life. For the most part she had control over what she did and made the most of all the hours available to her. She filled each day with as many activities as she could and gives the impression that she was almost never idle. In the database there were only about 12 per cent of days when Betty had no human contact outside the home, and on many of these days she had visitors in her own home. For instance, most of the days when she did not venture out occurred when she was in her late-80s and had regular help in the home. Being busy was simply what Betty did.

The detailed analysis of Betty's diaries clearly demonstrates the ways in which rhythms and routines were important, and changed, over her life course. It also provides both quantitative and qualitative evidence to support the theoretical material outlined at the start of this paper (Lefebvre, 2004; Edensor, 2010; Lyon, 2018). Betty's everyday life was governed by numerous routines: the necessity of paid employment, housework or caring; her regular patterns of movement within the locality; seasonal and weekly variations in her activities; and Betty's own needs to eat, rest or sleep. These factors affect all lives to varying degrees, but they are rarely revealed in detail in an historical context. It is not possible to generalise from one diary, but the detailed analysis of biographical material can illuminate the history of a family in ways that are not revealed by other methodologies.

### **Acknowledgements**

Thanks to Julia Bland for making this series of diaries available to me, and to Marilyn Pooley and Siân Pooley for comments on a draft of this paper.

## References

- Adey, P. & Anderson B. (2011). Anticipation, materiality, event: The Icelandic ash cloud disruption and the security of mobility. *Mobilities*, 6(1), 11-20.
- Alexander, S. (1995). *Becoming a woman: and other essays in 19th and 20th century feminist history*. New York University Press.
- Azzi, C. & Ehrenberg, R. (1975). Household allocation of time and church attendance. *Journal of Political Economy*, 83(1), 27-56.
- Baxter, J., Hewitt, B. & Haynes, M. (2008). Life course transitions and housework: Marriage, parenthood, and time on housework. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 70(2), 259-272.
- Bengtson, V., Elder, G. & Putney, N. (2012). The life course perspective on ageing: Linked lives, timing, and history. In J. Katz, S. Peace & S. Spurr (Eds.), *Adult lives: A life course perspective* (pp. 9-17). Policy Press.
- Benoit, K. (2018). Quantitative analysis of textual data for social sciences. *Impact*, 2018(4), 22-24.
- Berrington, A. (2020). Expectations for family transitions in young adulthood among the UK second generation. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(5), 913-935.
- Bhat, C. & Misra, R. (1999). Discretionary activity time allocation of individuals between in-home and out-of-home and between weekdays and weekends. *Transportation*, 26(2), 193-229.
- Bialowolski, P. & Weziak-Bialowolska, D. (2020). Longitudinal evidence for reciprocal effects between life satisfaction and job satisfaction. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-020-00273-1>.

- Bowden, S. and Offer, A. (1994). Household appliances and the use of time: the United States and Britain since the 1920s. *Economic History Review*, 47(4), 725-748.
- Braybon, G. & Summerfield, P. (2012). *Out of the cage: Women's experiences in two world wars*. Routledge.
- Burman, B. & Eicher, J. (Eds.). (1999). *The culture of sewing: gender, consumption and home dressmaking*. Berg.
- Cross, G. (2005). *Worktowners at Blackpool: Mass-Observation and popular leisure in the 1930s*. Routledge.
- Chiappori, P. & Lewbel, A. (2015). Gary Becker's a theory of the allocation of time. *The Economic Journal*, 125(583), 410-442.
- Coltrane, S. (1989). Household labor and the routine production of gender. *Social Problems*, 36(5), 473-490.
- Coltrane, S. (2000). Research on household labor: Modeling and measuring the social embeddedness of routine family work. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 62(4), 1208-1233.
- de Certeau, M. (1984). *The practice of everyday life* (translated by Steven Rendall). University of California Press. (Originally published in French in 1980).
- Delap, L (2011). *Knowing their place: domestic service in twentieth-century Britain*. Oxford University Press.
- Edensor, T. (2010a). Introduction: Thinking about rhythm and space. In T. Edensor (Ed.), *Geographies of rhythm: Nature, place, mobilities and bodies* (pp. 1-18). Ashgate.
- Edensor, T. (2010b). Walking in rhythms: Place, regulation, style and the flow of experience. *Visual Studies*, 25(1), 69-79.

- Elliott, J. & Shepherd, P. (2006). Cohort profile: 1970 British birth cohort (BCS70). *International Journal of Epidemiology*, 35(4), 836-843.
- Enloe, C. (2011). The mundane matters. *International Political Sociology*, 5(4), 447-450.
- Erikson, K. (1970). Sociology and the historical perspective. *The American Sociologist*, 5(4), 331-338.
- Ezell, M. (2016). Domestic papers: manuscript culture and early modern women's life writing. In M. Dowd and J. Eckerle Eds.), *Genre and women's life writing in early modern England* (pp. 33-48). Routledge.
- Feely, C. (2010). From dialectics to dancing: reading, writing and the experience of everyday life in the diaries of Frank P. Forster. *History Workshop Journal*, 69(1), 90-110.
- Felson, M. & Spaeth, J. (1978). Community structure and collaborative consumption: A routine activity approach. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 21(4), 614-624.
- Fothergill, R. (1974). *Private chronicles: A study of English diaries*. Oxford University Press.
- Gazeley, I. & Langhamer, C. (2013). The meanings of happiness in mass observation's Bolton. *History Workshop Journal*, 75(1), 159-189.
- Giles, J. (2002). Narratives of gender, class, and modernity in women's memories of mid-twentieth century Britain. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(1), 21-41.
- Gillis, S. & Hollows, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Feminism, domesticity and popular culture*. Routledge.
- Gluck, S. & Patai, D. (Eds.). (1991). *Women's words: The feminist practice of oral history*. Routledge.

- Goldthorpe, J. (1991). The uses of history in sociology: reflections on some recent tendencies. *British Journal of Sociology*, 42(2), 211-230.
- Gregory, I., Cooper, D., Hardie, A. & Rayson, P. (2015a). Spatializing and analyzing digital texts. Corpora, GIS, and places. In D. Bodenhamer, J. Corrigan & T. Harris (Eds.), *Deep maps and spatial narratives* (pp. 150-178). Indiana University Press.
- Gregory, I., Donaldson, C. Murrieta-Flores, P. & Rayson, P. (2015b). Geoparsing, GIS, and textual analysis: current developments in spatial humanities research. *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing*, 9(1), 1-14.
- Griffin, E. (2013). *Liberty's dawn: a people's history of the Industrial Revolution*. Yale University Press.
- Gurney, P. (1997). "Intersex" and "dirty girls": Mass-observation and working-class sexuality in England in the 1930s. *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 8(2), 256-290.
- Hägerstrand, T. (1970). What about people in regional science? *Papers of the Regional Science Association*, 24(1), 6–21.
- Hägerstrand, T. (1975). Space, time and human conditions. In A. Karlqvist, L. Lundqvist & F. Snickars (Eds.), *Dynamic allocation of urban space* (pp. 3-12). Saxon House.
- Harris, J. (1992). War and social history: Britain and the home front during the Second World War. *Contemporary European History*. 1(1), 17-35.
- Hewitt, M. (2006). Diary, autobiography and the practice of life history. In D. Amigoni (Ed.), *Life Writing and Victorian Culture* (pp. 21-39). Routledge.
- Highmore, B. (2004). Homework: Routine, social aesthetics and the ambiguity of everyday life. *Cultural Studies*, 18(2-3), 306-327.

- Hinton, J (2010). *Nine wartime lives: Mass Observation and the making of the modern self*. Oxford University Press.
- Holden, K. (2007). *The shadow of marriage: singleness in England, 1914-60*. Manchester University Press.
- Hubble, N. (2006). *Mass Observation and everyday life: culture, history, theory*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Humphries, J. (2010). *Childhood and child labour in the British industrial revolution*. Cambridge University Press.
- Kane, H. (2001). *Triumph of the mundane: The unseen trends that shape our lives and environment*. Island Press.
- Kushner, T. (2017). *We Europeans? Mass-Observation, race and British identity in the twentieth century*. Routledge.
- Langhamer, C. (2007). Love and courtship in mid-twentieth-century England. *Historical Journal*, 50(1), 173-196.
- Langhamer, C. (2016). An archive of feeling? Mass Observation and the mid-century moment. *Insights*, 9, 1-15.
- Langhamer, C. (2018). Who the hell are ordinary people?' Ordinarity as a category of historical analysis. *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*. 28, 175-195.
- Laslett, P. (1984). The significance of the past in the study of ageing: Introduction to the special issue on history and ageing. *Ageing & Society*, 4(4), 379-389

Lefcourt, H. & Davidson-Katz, K. (1991). Locus of control and health. In C. Snyder and D. Forsyth (Eds.), *Handbook of social and clinical psychology: The health perspective* (pp. 246-266). Pergamon Press.

Lefebvre, H. (2004). *Rhythmanalysis: Space, time and everyday life*. Continuum, (originally published in French in 1992).

Longhi, S. (2020). A longitudinal analysis of ethnic unemployment differentials in the UK. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(5), 879-892.

Lyon, D. (2018). *What is rhythmanalysis?* Bloomsbury.

Mack, A. (Ed.). (2005). Busyness. *Social Research: An International Quarterly*, 72(2), 263-500.

Marsden, G., Anable, J., Chatterton, T., Docherty, I., Faulconbridge, J., Murray, L., Roby, H. & Shires, J. (2020). Studying disruptive events: innovations in behaviour, opportunities for lower carbon transport policy? *Transport Policy*, 94, 89-101.

Matei, V., Mihăilescu, L., Diaconescu, V., Purnichi, T., Grigoraş, R. & Popa-Velea, O. (2018). Depression in young adults diagnosed with cancer—an analysis of the outcomes of 1970 British Cohort Study. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research*, 109, 118.

Medical Research Council (MRC). (2020). MRC National Survey of Health and Development Cohort /1946 Birth Cohort (NSHD/ 1946BC):

<https://mrc.ukri.org/research/facilities-and-resources-for-researchers/cohort-directory/mrc-national-survey-of-health-and-development-cohort-1946-birth-cohort-nshd-1946bc/>.

Meloni, I., Guala, L. & Loddo, A. (2004). Time allocation to discretionary in-home, out-of-home activities and to trips. *Transportation*, 31(1), 69-96.

- Moran, J. (2015). Private lives, public histories: the diary in twentieth-century Britain. *Journal of British Studies*, 54(1), 138-162.
- Morgan, D. (1993). Qualitative content analysis: a guide to paths not taken. *Qualitative Health Research*, 3(1), 112-121.
- Newman, L. & Dale, A. (2009). In praise of mundane nature: the unsung nature in alleyways and backyards plays an important--and undervalued--role in urban lives. *Alternatives Journal*, 35(2), 32-36.
- Nussbaum, F. (1988). Toward conceptualizing diary. In F. Nausbaum and J. Olney (Eds.), *Studies in Autobiography* (pp. 128-140). Oxford University Press.
- Office for National Statistics, (n.d.). *Census of England and Wales, 1981*:  
[https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census\\_1981](https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/sources/census_1981).
- Office for National Statistics, (2016). *Childbearing for women born in different years, England and Wales: 2015*, Figure 2:  
[https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptio  
nandfertilityrates/bulletins/childbearingforwomenbornindifferentyearsenglandandwales/2015](https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/conceptio<br/>
nandfertilityrates/bulletins/childbearingforwomenbornindifferentyearsenglandandwales/2015).
- Pearson, H., (2016). *The life project: The extraordinary story of 70,000 ordinary lives*. Counterpoint.
- Perks, R. & Thomson, A. (Eds.), (2015). *The oral history reader*. Routledge.
- Pooley, C. (2017). Cities, spaces and movement: everyday experiences of urban travel in England c1840-1940. *Urban History*, 44(1), 91-109.
- Pooley, C. & Pooley, S. (2010). Constructing a suburban identity: youth, femininity and modernity in late-Victorian Merseyside. *Journal of Historical Geography*, 36(4), 402-410.

- Rees, D. & Sabia, J. (2010). Exercise and adolescent mental health: new evidence from longitudinal data. *The Journal of Mental Health Policy and Economics*, 13(1), 13-25.
- Reid-Musson, E. (2018). Intersectional rhythmanalysis: Power, rhythm, and everyday life. *Progress in Human Geography*, 42(6), 881-897.
- Ritchie, D. (2014). *Doing oral history*. Oxford University Press.
- Savage, M. (2007). Changing social class identities in post-war Britain: Perspectives from mass-observation. *Sociological Research Online*, 12(3), 14-26.
- Sheridan, D. (1993). Writing to the archive: Mass-observation as autobiography. *Sociology*, 27(1), 27-40.
- Sherman, S. (2005). Diary and autobiography. In J. Richetti (Ed.), *The Cambridge history of English literature, 1660-1780* (pp. 623-648). Cambridge University Press.
- Simpson, P. (2012). Apprehending everyday rhythms: rhythmanalysis, time-lapse photography, and the space-times of street performance. *Cultural Geographies*, 19(4), 423-445.
- Sinor, J. (2002). *The extraordinary work of ordinary writing: Annie Ray's diary*. University of Iowa Press.
- Smyth, A. (2008). Almanacs, annotators, and life-writing in early modern England. *English Literary Renaissance*, 38(2), 200-244.
- Snell, K. (2015). Agendas for the historical study of loneliness and lone living. *The Open Psychology Journal*, 8(1), 61-70.
- Snell, K. (2017). The rise of living alone and loneliness in history. *Social History*, 42(1), 2-28.

- Summerfield, P. (1985). Mass-observation: social research or social movement? *Journal of Contemporary History*, 20(3), 439-452.
- Summerfield, P. (1998). *Reconstructing women's wartime lives: discourse and subjectivity in oral histories of the Second World War*. Manchester University Press.
- Summerfield, P. (2019). *Histories of the self: personal narratives and historical practice*. Routledge.
- Tang, C-Y. (2012). Routine housework and tripartite marital commitment. *Personal Relationships*, 19(3), 483-503.
- Thompson, P. (4<sup>th</sup> edition 2017). *The voice of the past: Oral history*. Oxford University Press.
- Thomson, A. (2013). 'Tied to the kitchen sink'? Women's lives and women's history in mid-twentieth century Britain and Australia. *Women's History Review*, 22(1), 126-147.
- Tinkler, P. & Krasnick Warsh, C. (2008). Feminine modernity in interwar Britain and North America: Corsets, cars, and cigarettes. *Journal of Women's History*, 20(3), 113-143.
- Todd, S. (2019). *Tastes of Honey: The making of Shelagh Delaney and a cultural revolution*. Random House.
- Tsai, Y. (2010). Returns to overeducation: A longitudinal analysis of the US labor market. *Economics of Education Review*, 29(4), 606-617.
- UK Data Service. (2020). *Longitudinal Surveys*: <https://ukdataservice.ac.uk/get-data/key-data/cohort-and-longitudinal-studies>.
- University College London. (n.d.). Centre for Longitudinal Studies: <https://cls.ucl.ac.uk/>.

University of Essex. (n.d.). *British Household Panel Survey*.

<https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/bhps>.

University of Essex. (n.d.). *UK Household Longitudinal Study*:

<https://www.understandingsociety.ac.uk/>.

University of Sussex. (2015). *Mass Observation Archive*: <http://www.massobs.org.uk/>.

van Beijsterveldt, C., Blokhuis, M., Hottenga, J., Franić, S., Hudziak, J., Lamb, D., Huppertz, C., de Zeeuw, E., Nivard, M., Nienke, S., Swagerman, S. Glasner, T. van Fulpen, M., Brouwer, C., Stoet, T., Nowotny, D., Ehli, E., Davies G., Scheet, P. ... Boomsma, D.

(2013). The Young Netherlands Twin Register (YNTR): longitudinal twin and family studies in over 70,000 children. *Twin Research and Human Genetics*, 16(1), 252-267.

Vanek, J. (2012). Time spent in housework. In F. Cott (Ed.), *Domestic ideology and domestic work* (pp. 433-442). K.G. Saur.

Vincent, D. (2020). *A history of solitude*. Polity Press.

Wu, C-H., Griffin, M. & Parker, S. (2015). Developing agency through good work: Longitudinal effects of job autonomy and skill utilization on locus of control. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 89, 102-108.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> . The first draft of this paper was written in June 2020 when many of the restrictions on everyday activity due to the Covid-19 pandemic were in force. For most people this has emphasised the way in which an external force can disrupt established life routines and create new ones.

<sup>2</sup> . For examples of work that explores ordinary lives see for example Sinor (2002) and Feely (2010).

<sup>3</sup> . I have been given access to the diaries by a relative of Betty, with permission to use the material for research and publication. Both Betty (and her relative) were happy not to be anonymised, but in diary extracts I have anonymised most personal names and some places as the diary contains references to people still living who have not given permission to be identified.

<sup>4</sup> . This material is not analysed in this paper as the interview could not provide the same degree of detail of everyday activities as is contained in the diaries.

<sup>5</sup> . The Second World War appeared to have minimal impact on the family's rural life.

<sup>6</sup> . I have read the entire set of diaries and have transcribed substantial sections. However, I do not have a transcription of the entire manuscript. For the analysis in this paper all the weeks sampled were re-read so that every activity mentioned could be recorded numerically.

<sup>7</sup> . It is not suggested that this is a general model for the lives of twentieth-century women, although most women are likely to have experienced many of these phases at some time during their lives.

<sup>8</sup> . Those not married included all single, widowed or divorced. Betty lived alone from 1977.

---

<sup>9</sup> . Time allocation between discretionary and non-discretionary activities has mostly been studied from the perspective of econometrics.

<sup>10</sup> . Betty attended various needlecraft classes for much of her life, she made her own clothes, clearly sewed for pleasure and (latterly) did embroidery and tapestry for the local church. She also visited exhibitions of tapestry and embroidery. For a perspective on the culture of needlecraft in the past see Burman and Eicher, 1999.

<sup>11</sup> . Remember, these data relate to frequency of occurrence and not to time allocation. Obviously, a portion of her life was heavily dominated by the demands of work. This is considered more briefly later in the paper though firm data on time allocation are not available.

<sup>12</sup> . After the family left the farm Betty provided almost all household income and increasingly took responsibility for domestic duties. There was never any mention of payments for board but, rather, that the familial obligations that she met were taken-for-granted and a routine part of life.

<sup>13</sup> . Total time assumes a 24hr day; waking time assumes a 16hr day.

<sup>14</sup> . It may be that this is in part an artefact of a factual diary of this sort. However, it can also be suggested that cultures of domesticity in the twentieth century meant that many women did feel the need to be constantly busy and useful within the home. See for instance Gillis and Hollows (2008), and for a more general discussion of busyness see the essays in Mack (2005).

<sup>15</sup> . For a discussion of ‘ordinariness’ in the twentieth century see Langhamer (2018).

<sup>16</sup> . For a discussion of the experiences of post-war women beyond those of motherhood and domestic duties see Todd (2019).

<sup>17</sup> . For a discussion of the impact of the Second World War on British society see Harris (1992).