

Spotlight on the traveller: individual experiences of routine journeys.

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Abstract

All travel generates a range of feelings, responses and emotions that can be stimulated by many factors but recovering such responses to everyday travel in the past is difficult. Few conventional sources provide information on the travellers' experiences of movement and, not surprisingly, most transport histories focus mainly on matters of infrastructure, usage, and technological change. In contrast contemporary mobilities studies that can talk directly to those who travel do explore the lived experiences of mobility in some detail. This paper shows how, by using a range of life writing drawn from nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain, it is possible to begin to recover at least some of the feelings and responses that past travellers experienced. I argue that such an approach provides an important additional perspective to research in transport history.

Key words: Mobility; Feelings; Emotions; Life writing; Travellers

Biography

Colin Pooley is Emeritus Professor of Social and Historical Geography in the Environment Centre, Lancaster University, UK. His research focuses on the social geography of Britain and continental Europe since *circa* 1800, with recent projects focused on residential migration, travel to work and other aspects of everyday mobility. His current research focuses on the ways in which mobility has changed since the nineteenth century and the implications of this for present-day transport policies.

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Introduction

All travel, be it local or global, generates a range of feelings and emotions in the traveller. These may range from senses of excitement and anticipation to those of apprehension and fear.¹ Different feelings may be combined: for instance, eager anticipation of a long-awaited meeting but apprehension about an unfamiliar journey. The environment in which and through which the traveller moves also generates a range of personal responses.² The comfort of the vehicle, the fellow passengers on public transport and the speed of the journey may generate both positive and negative responses.³ Likewise, the environment through which the traveller passes and even the weather conditions at the time may themselves generate a complex set of emotions. The intensity of

¹ . See for instance: M. Korstanje, "The Fear of Traveling: A New Perspective for Tourism and Hospitality", *Anatolia* 22:2 (2011), 222-33; P. Mokhtarian, I. Salomon and M. Singer, "What Moves Us? An interdisciplinary Exploration of Reasons for Traveling", *Transport Reviews* 35:3 (2015), 250-74.

² . Y. F. Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes, and Values* (New York NY: Columbia University Press, 1990); J. Gold and G. Revill, "Exploring Landscapes of Fear: Marginality, Spectacle and Surveillance", *Capital & Class* 27:2 (2003), 27-50.

³ . On a range of different passenger experiences see for example: S. Stradling, M. Carreno, T. Rye and A. Noble, "Passenger Perceptions and the Ideal Urban Bus Journey Experience", *Transport Policy* 14:4 (2007), 283-92; L. Watts, "The Art and Craft of Train Travel", *Social & Cultural Geography* 9:6 (2008), 711-26; E. Laurier, H. Lorimer, B. Brown, O. Jones, O. Juhlin, A. Noble, M. Perry, D. Pica, P. Sormani, I. Strebel and L. Swan, "Driving and 'Passenger': Notes on the Ordinary Organization of Car Travel", *Mobilities* 3:1 (2008), 1-23; D. Bissell, "Conceptualising Differently-Mobile Passengers: Geographies of Everyday Encumbrance in the Railway Station", *Social & Cultural Geography* 10:2 (2009), 173-95.

travel-generated feelings will also vary depending on the nature of the journey. Travel that is familiar and routine, such as the journey to work or school, is likely to generate much more mundane and less intense responses than a trip that is undertaken for the first time. Similarly, travel alone may generate different feelings from a journey that is accompanied by a trusted relative or friend. In contemporary mobility studies⁴ it is possible to explore the range of feelings generated by travel through a range of immersive techniques including interviews, accompanied journeys and travel diaries or videos.⁵ Recovering the responses of travellers to their journeys in the past is much more difficult but, I argue, is an important aspect of transport history that deserves to be given much greater attention. A focus on the travellers' experiences of their journeys requires a totally different set of approaches and data sources compared to much transport history with its focus on infrastructures, timetables and technological innovations. It also brings transport history closer to mobility studies and opens up new avenues for investigation. There have already been significant moves in this direction through recent contributions from a number of authors who have sought to link transport history to the social and cultural approaches of mobilities scholars.⁶ The aim of this

⁴ . For discussions of this field of study see (among many others): M. Sheller and J. Urry, "The New Mobilities Paradigm", *Environment and Planning A* 38:2 (2006), 207-26; K. Hannam, M. Sheller and J. Urry, "Mobilities, Immobilities and Moorings", *Mobilities* 1:1, (2006), 1-22; M. Sheller and J. Urry, "Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm", *Applied Mobilities* 1:1 (2016), 10-25; J. Faulconbridge and A. Hui, "Traces of a Mobile Field: Ten Years of Mobilities Research", *Mobilities* 11:1 (2016), 1-14.

⁵ . M. Büscher, J. Urry and K. Witchger (eds.), *Mobile Methods* (London: Routledge, 2010); B. Fincham, M. McGuinness and L. Murray (eds.), *Mobile Methodologies* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); P. Merriman, "Rethinking Mobile Methods", *Mobilities* 9:2 (2014), 167-87.

⁶ . For discussions of this topic see: C. Divall and G. Reville, "Cultures of Transport: Representation, Practice and Technology", *The Journal of Transport History* 26:1 (2005), 99-111; C. Divall, "Mobilities and Transport History", in P. Adey, D. Bissell, K. Hammam, P. Merriman, M. Sheller (eds.), *The*

paper is to use data drawn from nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain to demonstrate that it is possible to recover at least some of the ways in which past travellers responded to their journeys, and to argue that an approach centred on the traveller rather than on the transport should form a more central plank of research in transport history.

Not all travellers are the same, not all places are similar, and not all travel conditions are equally comfortable. It is important to consider the ways in which travel experiences varied in relation to a range of conditions and situations. For example, it is likely that the experience of travelling through rural areas will generate different sets of emotions compared to urban travel,⁷ that different modes and speeds of travel will influence reactions,⁸ and that women may feel differently about a journey compared to men, especially if they are travelling alone.⁹ Reactions to travel can also be affected by factors such as weather conditions, mishaps, perceptions of risk, and

Routledge Handbook of Mobilities (Abingdon, New York: Routledge, 2014), 36-44; C. Pooley, *Mobility, Migration and Transport: Historical Perspectives* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); C. Pooley, "Connecting Historical Studies of Transport, Mobility and Migration", *The Journal of Transport History* 38:2 (2017), 251-59; S. Gunn, "Spatial Mobility in Later Twentieth-Century Britain", *Contemporary British History*, (2021), Early online: DOI: [10.1080/13619462.2020.1858060](https://doi.org/10.1080/13619462.2020.1858060).

⁷ . J. Larsen, "Tourism Mobilities and the Travel Glance: Experiences of Being on the Move", *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism* 1:2 (2001), 80-98.

⁸ . J. Dickinson and L. Lumsdon, *Slow Travel and Tourism* (London: Earthscan, 2010).

⁹ . E. Wilson and D. Little, "A 'Relative Escape'? The Impact of Constraints on Women Who Travel Solo", *Tourism Review International* 9:2 (2005), 155-75; E. Wilson and D. Little, "The Solo Female Travel Experience: Exploring the 'Geography of Women's Fear'", *Current Issues in Tourism* 11:2 (2008), 167-86.

particularly distinctive environments.¹⁰ Some of these varied experiences of travel are explored in this paper using life writing in the form of personal diaries written by women and men who lived in Britain during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Personal diaries survive unevenly and can never provide a representative sample of the population or across all time periods. For these reasons it is not possible to provide a systematic assessment of travellers' experiences of journeys across all time periods and places, or for men and women of all ages and social positions. The paper is designed to illustrate what might be achieved through the use of life writing and similar sources, rather than to provide a systematic account of change over time or space.

Recovering travellers' experiences: sources of information

Ideally, historical studies of travel and travellers should be able to reproduce the level of detail and insight that may be generated by contemporary studies that use a range of ethnographic and visual techniques.¹¹ In practice this is not possible, but there are sources that can begin to fill the gaps in our knowledge of past travel. For the more recent past it may be possible to use oral history interviews to recover experiences of everyday travel.¹² However, memories of most routine and everyday events tend to fade rapidly, and it is likely that recollections of past travel may be shaped by later experiences and information gained through popular media. Other sources such as

¹⁰ . L. Böcker, M. Dijst and J. Prillwitz, "Impact of Everyday Weather on Individual Daily Travel Behaviours in Perspective: A Literature Review", *Transport Reviews* 33:1 (2013), 71-91; R. Law, "The Perceived Impact of Risks on Travel Decisions", *International Journal of Tourism Research* 8:4 (2006), 289-300.

¹¹ . Büscher et al., *Mobile Methods*; Fincham et al., *Mobile Methodologies*; Merriman, "Rethinking Mobile Methods".

¹² . R. Perks, *Oral History: Talking About the Past* (London: Historical Association, 1995); D. Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); P. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

newspapers and magazines may also provide some information, together with contemporary photographs that can reveal who was on the street at a particular time of day.¹³ Court records such as witness and victim statements may also provide relevant data,¹⁴ and an ambitious study of Amsterdam is currently utilising a range of sources to map spatial patterns of street use in the nineteenth-century city.¹⁵ While the above archival sources do allow some reconstruction of who was on the street, when and where, they tell us much less about the motivations for travel and the feelings and emotions that mobility generated. No source allows a complete reconstruction of travellers' responses to journeys, and such emotions were often fleeting and totally unrecorded, but personal diaries can begin to provide some insights.¹⁶ Diaries that were written daily can provide a

¹³ . T. Männistö-Funk, "The Gender of Walking: Female Pedestrians in Street Photographs 1890–1989", *Urban History* 48:2 (2021), 227-247; C. Pooley, M. Emanuel, T. Männistö-Funk and P. Norton, "Introduction: Historical Perspectives on Pedestrians and the City", *Urban History* 48:2 (2019), 204-210 ; T. Männistö-Funk, "Recovering Sustainable Mobility Practices: A Visual History of Turku's Streetscape 1950-1980", in M. Emanuel, F. Schipper and R. Oldenziel (eds.), *A U-Turn to the Future: Sustainable Urban Mobility since 1850* (2020), 172-98.

¹⁴ . C. Pooley, "On the Street in Nineteenth-Century London", *Urban History* 48:2 (2019), 211-226.

¹⁵ . D. van den Heuvel, B. Pierik, B. Amaro and I. Kisjes, "Capturing Gendered Mobility and Street Use in the Historical City: A New Methodological Approach", *Cultural and Social History* 17:4 (2020), 1-22; D. van den Heuvel, "Gender in the Streets of the Premodern City", *Journal of Urban History* 45:4 (2019), 693-710.

¹⁶ . For a discussion of diaries and some of their limitations see: R. Fothergill, *Private Chronicles: A Study of English Diaries* (London: Oxford University Press, 1974); M. Hewitt, "Diary, Autobiography and the Practice of Life History", in D. Amigoni (ed.), *Life Writing and Victorian Culture* (London: Routledge, 2006), 21-39; A. Ponsonby, *English Diaries: A Review of English Diaries from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century, With an Introduction on Diary Writing* (London: Methuen & Co, 1923); S.

near contemporary account of even the most mundane aspects of everyday life, including travel, noting not only how and why the diarist travelled but what she or he felt about the journey. However, diaries do have many limitations. Their survival is sporadic with few surviving for the poorest sectors of a population, and they are demographically skewed as young women tended to be the most prolific diary writers. Diaries can thus never be used to create a representative sample of a total population, but rather they may provide selected insights into aspects of mobility that otherwise remain hidden. Not all diaries are equal and while some can be very detailed with discursive writing about the diarist's feelings, others may consist of little more than a series of brief factual statements relating to the day's events. Few diarists reveal their inner-most emotions, but most do give some details of everyday practices and responses to travel. It is impossible to know what a diarist chose to omit from their record, and it may be the case that the most mundane activities were under-recorded simply because of their familiarity. The analysis of diaries also presents practical and methodological challenges. Diaries are not always easy to locate in archives, many are difficult to read, and some may contain personal information that could raise ethical issues about their use. Any study of qualitative data must be selective and for this paper I have simply selected ten diaries from a larger set that provide different examples of travellers' responses to their journeys. Diaries can rarely provide data that are quantifiable as their content is variable and selective. Analysis thus must be mainly subjective and interpretative, and diaries must always be used with care, and with due consideration of their limitations.

The diaries used in this paper to demonstrate the ways in which life writing can provide fresh insights into the experience of travel in the past come from a set of some 60 diaries studied as

Sherman, "Diary and Autobiography," in J. Richetti (ed.), *The Cambridge History of English Literature, 1660-1780* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 623-48.

part of a wider study of past mobility in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain.¹⁷ All the personal diaries were written by men and women with no public profile and were never intended for publication. In this paper I do not attempt to provide a comprehensive account of changes in mobility over time, or of the lives of the individual diarists. Rather, I focus on some of the ways in which travel might generate particular feelings and emotions: the impact of weather; experience of accidents; the degree of inconvenience or comfort; the impact of companions; the effects of novelty; sensations of speed; and reactions to the environment that was travelled through. These are obviously not the only factors that influence feelings while travelling, and they often interact with each other, but they provide a framework within which to analyse travellers' responses while travelling in the past. It is taken for granted that during the period under study the technologies of transport changed, and that there were both social and spatial inequalities in access to transport with mobility structured by gender, class and the different levels of transport provision in rural and urban areas. These are well documented elsewhere and are not the focus of this paper.¹⁸ Rather, the

¹⁷ . For more information on this project see: C. Pooley, "Travelling Through the City: Using Life Writing to Explore Individual Experiences of Urban Travel c1840–1940", *Mobilities* 12:4 (2017), 598-609; C. Pooley, "Cities, Spaces and Movement: Everyday Experiences of Urban Travel in England c1840-1940", *Urban History* 44:1 (2017), 91-109; C. Pooley and M. Pooley, "Young Women On The Move: Britain c1880-1950", *Social Science History* 45:3 (2021), 495-517.

¹⁸ . C. Pooley, "Mobility, Transport and Social Inclusion: Lessons from History", *Social Inclusion* 4:3 (2016), 100-109; K. Lucas, "Transport and Social Exclusion: Where are we Now?", *Transport Policy* 20 (2012), 105-113; J. Hine, "Mobility and Transport Disadvantage", in M. Grieco and J. Urry (eds.), *Mobilities: New Perspectives on Transport and Society* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 21-40; H. J. Dyos, and D. Aldcroft, *British Transport: An Economic Survey from the Seventeenth Century to the Twentieth* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1969); C. Divall, J. Hine and C. Pooley (eds.), *Transport Policy: Learning Lessons from History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016).

themes identified are designed to illustrate the ways in which selected experiences of mobility were structured and varied in different places and for different people.

The impact of weather

Weather conditions can have a large impact on the pleasure, or otherwise, of a journey and can generate a wide range of feelings and emotions. Even today everyday transport can be disrupted by rain, wind, snow or ice, and the same was true in the past. Some forms of mobility require more exposure to the elements than others and thus are more likely to be impacted by the prevailing conditions. Enclosed transport such as a carriage, train, tram, omnibus or car provide protection from the elements, but their progress can be severely disrupted by adverse weather. Walking and cycling generate much more direct exposure to the elements and can require the traveller to adjust their usual routines. Although travel on foot was the usual form of mobility for most people in the early-nineteenth century, even those rich enough to be able to travel by carriage could be significantly affected by the weather. The impression that extreme weather conditions made on 14-year-old Raleigh Trevelyan in 1814 as he travelled from home back to his boarding school after the Christmas holidays provides a vivid example of the way in which deep snow could add a new dimension to a journey that was otherwise familiar. Although the young Trevelyan was travelling in one of the most comfortable and protected forms of transport available at the time his journey was clearly far from comfortable:

Got up at 5 Was in the chaise at 7 & at St Lawrence in 20 minutes. The snow there is 4 feet deep the road cut through it. Past the turnpike the snow is very deep in a road not used in winter & a deep chalk pit is full of water on account of the snow having melted into it. in another place the snow is 2 feet deep & the road cut through it. By 2 mills we went a little out of the road into a field for some way on account of the snow. in another place the snow is 5 feet & the river has overflowed several fields. The snow by Faversham is 3,4,5,6 feet & about the same depth all the way to Gravesend particularly on Chatham hill w[h]ere it is

almost 7 feet & the road cut through almost all the way. Arrived at Charlton at 6 PM (when we dined) having had the same chaise all the way from Canterbury with a crack at the bottom you could put your fingers through.¹⁹

The much greater impact of weather when walking, and the impression it made on the diarist, is indicated in the following extract from the diary of an anonymous lady when she was taking a short walk to chapel with two friends or relations in Brighton in 1833. The three women had to seek assistance from two men who apparently shepherded them to their destination:

Went in the morning to Dr Everards chapel as we turned the corner of Waterloo Street the wind which was extremely violent took us completely off our feet & though Mary & I & Miss Baker who was with us held each other fast we were swept along with extreme violence till after much difficulty and danger we got hold of some rails where a baker & a police officer came to our rescue & with their assistance we proceeded to the chapel.²⁰

Adverse weather can equally generate feelings of concern and apprehension when travelling over greater distances by train, bus or car. Although in an enclosed space and protected from the weather, worry about disruption and delay could be expressed by diarists during periods of snow or heavy rain. Gillian Caldwell noted her dismay at the extent of flooding that affected a journey from her parental home in Eskdale (Cumberland)²¹ to Edinburgh in 1954. She had to make diversions to avoid floods during her drive to the station and was also worried about the train journey to Scotland:

¹⁹ . Wigan and Leigh Archives, Leigh, Lancashire, UK, Edward Hall collection, EHC/191, Diary of Raleigh Trevelyan, age 14, Kent, Tuesday 1 February 1814.

²⁰ . Wigan and Leigh Archives, Leigh, Lancashire, UK, Edward Hall collection, EHC/96, Diary of an anonymous women, Brighton, Wednesday 20 February 1833.

²¹ . Now Cumbria.

It's been raining solidly all day & I'm worried lest the trains can't get through Beattock way. ... Pa and I set out about 3 and picked Jeanne up & then we had the most perilous journey to 'haven. Traffic was diverted at Egremont 'cos just beyond Thornhill the water on the road was 2' deep. All the rivers between Eskdale and Gosforth have burst their banks and the Calder is the worst of the lot. Due to all this I missed the 'Mid-day Scot' & didn't get to Edinburgh till well after 10,00. So I got a taxi straight home & got straight into bed.²²

While none of these sentiments and experiences is unusual, and travel disruption caused by adverse weather remains common today, it is unusual to be able to recover travellers' personal experiences of weather disruption in the past. Newspaper reports may provide a general picture, but only with the use of personal diaries and similar writing can the immediate reactions of past travellers be revealed.

Accidents while travelling

Most travel in the past was safe and relatively uneventful. But on occasion accidents could occur when moving from place to place by any means. This may especially have been the case when new transport technologies were less reliable, and travellers were less familiar with using them. The diaries studied record a small number of incidents in which feelings of concern or dismay were expressed by the diarist. John Leeson lived in London in the mid-nineteenth century and travelled around the city by a variety of different means. He recorded one occasion that clearly scared him as the carriage he was travelling in ran away out of control:

Mrs Tunks spent a few days with us – I after are come home from London in a Fly – the horse ran away with me alone in it from our horse, he providentially stopped at his old stables near Addison Road – I have much cause to be thankful to God for preserving me as I

²² Bishopsgate Institute Archives, London, UK (hereafter BIA), GDP/1, Diary of Gillian Caldwell, Cumberland, age 17, Monday 8 November 1954.

might have been thrown out and killed or much hurt – for which protection I bless his Holy Name.²³

Rail accidents also occurred from time to time and John Lee, who lived in Lancashire in the 1860s, describes an incident that he experienced on a day trip by train to Merseyside. The incident was clearly quite serious, with some minor injuries, but the level of concern expressed in his diary was somewhat less than that recorded by John Leeson. This may have been because the latter was much older than Lee, or maybe simply reflected a difference in personality: “Went on a cheap trip to a Grand Review at Knowsley Park near Liverpool. We had a slight accident at the Accrington Station, where several got black eyes, bloody noses &c &c. We had to go to Kirkby Station, and then walk four miles to Knowsley”.²⁴

Cycling is probably seen by many people as one of the riskier forms of transport and any regular cyclist will expect their share of punctures, near-misses and falls. In the main these are taken for granted and although inconvenient do not necessarily generate strong feelings. Nor do they prevent the cyclist continuing with this form of transport. This appeared to be the case for Ida Berry, a young lady who lived in Manchester in the early twentieth century. She and her sister were keen cyclists and went out regularly on quite long bike rides. On one occasion she recorded a fall when cycling into central Manchester, but according to her diary entry this generated relatively little concern and did not prevent her from continuing to cycle: “Maud and I cycled to All Saints. Coming back she was thrown off and hurt her knee. I was thrown off the previous evening. After tea I went for a ride by myself”.²⁵

²³ . BIA, GDP/8, Diary of John Leeson, age 57, London, 26 April 1861.

²⁴ . Author’s personal collection, Diary of John Lee, age 18, Lancashire, 1 September 1860.

²⁵ . BIA GDP/28, Diary of Ida Berry, age 26, Manchester, 24 July 1906.

Although most studies of mobility and transport focus on journeys over some distance from one place to another, the movements that are taken every day around the home are probably the most frequent forms of human mobility. For the most part these are unproblematic and taken for granted, and therefore not recorded in a diary. However, in cases of illness or infirmity such small-scale but essential movement from one room to another, or up and down stairs, can become problematic and cause considerable concern and distress. The diarist Betty²⁶ recorded one such incident in 2013 when she was 85 year's old and becoming increasingly immobile. She had previously led a very active life, and still lived alone and valued her independence. The frustration and concern that she felt when incapacity prevented her from getting up and moving downstairs is clearly expressed in her diary entry:

What a morning!! About 5am, old time, could not push myself up from the bed side, after about ½ an hour, disided [sic] to go on my knee's to the landing step, but no luck, after periods of getting back my breath. Went back on my knees and a stool for support, to try and use the landing step, got on to the chair lift, but again no luck, with a struggle managed to get back into the bedroom, I decided to ring next door ... Anne rang for help, about ¾ of an hour, the Paramedics came.²⁷

Inconveniences of travelling

It is not unusual to encounter minor inconveniences when travelling, most of which are unlikely to have been sufficiently significant to be recorded in a daily diary. However, some events do stand out,

²⁶ . Extracts from this diary are partially anonymised because although I have permission from the diarist (now deceased) and from her closest relative to use and publish from the diary, other people mentioned in the diary are still living and have not been consulted. All other diaries used are in open access public collections or can be used with permission of the owner.

²⁷ . Author's personal collection, Diary of Betty, age 85, Sunday 27 October 2013.

including the times when the traveller feels particularly at risk, when they have belongings lost or stolen, or – and especially for female travellers – when they attracted unwanted attention from the opposite sex. The diaries studied record several such incidents. Elizabeth Lee was a young woman living on Merseyside in the late-nineteenth century. She travelled regularly around her local area, sometimes alone at other times with friends, and rarely recorded any significant problems. However, her diary entry for September 1891 does record the inconveniences of a combination of bad weather, mud and a lost purse while travelling on foot and by train:

Walked to the “Agricultural Show” with May and Edith Burnett, was a most lovely day till we got there and then it just rained in torrents. Could’nt [sic] get proper shelter as there were so many people, the mud was half a foot deep; had to come home by train, E. got her purse stolen. I never shall forget that show. Spoilt shoes and gloves completely to say nothing of my dress.²⁸

Lost luggage while travelling was also a minor inconvenience that was recorded by diarists from time to time. Sometimes this was purely accidental, sometimes due to carelessness and occasionally due to theft. Mary Leesmith seemed to have particular problems with her luggage as she journeyed from her home into central London in 1896. While one loss was presumably due to an error at the left luggage office at Liverpool Street, the second loss appeared to be due to her own carelessness in leaving some of her possessions on the train. One assumes that she eventually was reunited with her luggage, but this is not recorded in the diary:

Went to the station for the 10.28 train ... got to Liverpool St a little after 11 and found George waiting there for me. We went to see after my luggage and found it had been

²⁸ . C. Pooley, S. Pooley and R. Lawton, *The diary of Elizabeth Lee. Growing up on Merseyside in the late-nineteenth century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2010). Elizabeth Lee, age 24, Merseyside, Thursday 3 September 1891.

carried off by someone and theirs left in its stead. Very tiresome. ... Then we rode on top of a bus down to Whitechapel to the exhibition there. ... On leaving there we went back to the station, no box yet. Left Broad St at 4.20 and reached Bushey at 5-6, forgot the easel which went on to Watford! Delighted to be with G again.²⁹

The inconveniences and abuses that some women experience from men while travelling are well documented in contemporary literature,³⁰ but they were recorded only rarely in the female diaries studied. It may be that the nineteenth- and early-twentieth century was a more polite age, with more respect for women, or possibly that these were such taken-for-granted inconveniences that they were rarely recorded. It is also likely that the extent to which unwanted male attention was attracted by female travellers depended in part on the age of the traveller and the locations travelled through. The 18-year-old Annie Rudolph, who travelled frequently in central London did record several occasions when she attracted unwanted attention from men of all ages. She was an attractive young lady who wore fashionable clothes (some of which she designed herself) and she often walked through London's West End. One such incident was recorded in December 1923. Encounters of this sort did not curb her activities, but they were clearly very unwelcome and disturbing at the time:

I almost fainted with horror the other day. I was up West with my friend – we were strolling along looking into the shops. I was walking with my hand swinging limply. Suddenly I felt another hand touch mine – and squeeze it – I gasped – and turned. It was an old man about over 50 – I went all colours – and clasping my friend - I flew along until we were a long

²⁹ . BIA GDP/95, Diary of Mary Leesmith, age 25, London, Monday 13 April 1896.

³⁰ . L. Bates, *Everyday Sexism: The Project that Inspired a Worldwide Movement* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2014).

distance from there – I was horrified. Whenever I am up West I walk – looking neither to the right or the left – It’s beastly – but that’s how it is.³¹

Novelty

By no means all the feelings and emotions that were expressed while travelling were negative, and positive feelings of excitement or enjoyment were noted at least as frequently as those occasions where a journey was troublesome or worrying. In particular, new experiences either in the form of travel or the activities encountered could increase the interest of a journey and make it more memorable. Such factors would also be likely to make it more likely that the event was recorded in a diary. Elizabeth Lee was on holiday in the Isle of Man in 1892 when she drove the gig that she and her male companion were travelling in. There had only been one previous diary entry that recorded her driving a short distance in the family carriage close to home. Clearly, this excursion was a novel and memorable occasion:

Lovely day. Mr. Young called and had a row with him. Went to Kirk Braddam with Tom F. It is quite a sight to see, they have an open-air service. Drove in gig with Tom thro’ Peel to Glen Maye. Loveliest place I ever saw. I drove home all the way and round the Prom. the Scotchman saw me etc. people did look, as it is quite an uncommon thing to see a lady driving.³²

A journey could also become memorable because of the behaviour of others, rather than through a new experience that directly involved the traveller. In October 1923 Annie Rudolph used her diary to describe an incident that occurred while she was travelling on a bus in London. Her sentiments combine a mixture of surprise, interest, and mild shock as she accidentally observed the behaviour

³¹ . BIA GDP/31, Diary of Annie Rudolph, age 18, London, Friday 12 December 1923.

³² . Pooley et al., *Diary of Elizabeth Lee*, age 25, Isle of Man (holiday), Sunday 10 July 1892.

of two fellow travellers. The incident certainly appeared to make the journey more memorable than most of her routine travel around the city:

It was such a joke yesterday It wasn't really nice but it was funny – anyone would have laughed. I was on the top of a bus with a friend – it was rather late – I'd been for a ride – and we were just going home – of course it was dark – it wasn't too cold – so we went on top. We were talking and all that – the bus was full and we were travelling very fast – I did enjoy the ride. Suddenly I heard a giggle behind me – a girl's giggle – and a boy's voice said – “funny place to be ticklish”. I thought this a queer remark and just glanced round – I don't know what made me really turn – but I just did – I gasped – and turned away quickly. That couple gasped more – their faces turned pink – they jumped up and got off the very next stop (nuff said).³³

Unusual speed could also imprint a journey more firmly on a traveller's mind and may lead to it being recorded in a diary in more detail than the usual brief mention of a destination and means of transport. Speed is likely to be particularly noticeable when travelling by bike as the rider is exposed to the elements, and while being exhilarating may also engender an element of risk.³⁴ As noted above, Ida Berry was a keen cyclist and, with her sister, frequently went out for rides from their home in Manchester. Her diary entry in August 1906 suggests that the beautiful evening and the speed with which they rode their bikes made the outing especially memorable for them: “Maud and I cycled to Alderley Edge after tea, it was a glorious ride we scorched home”.³⁵ Air travel was a form of mobility that became increasingly common during the second half of the twentieth century and would have combined elements of both novelty and speed that previously would have been unimaginable. By

³³ . BIA GDP/31, Diary of Annie Rudolph, age 17, London, Friday 17 October 1923.

³⁴ . J. Spinney, “A Place of Sense: A Kinaesthetic Ethnography of Cyclists on Mont Ventoux”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24:5 (2006), 709-732.

³⁵ . BIA GDP/28, Diary of Ida Berry, age 26, 8 August 1906.

the 1980s the deregulation of air travel in Europe had led to the rapid development of budget airlines with consequential cheaper and more frequent flights to many destinations.³⁶ In common with many others during this period Betty took advantage of these opportunities in 1989. She had recently retired (age 60) and with her increased freedom took her first foreign holiday,³⁷ travelling with friends, to the Tunisian resort of Sousse. Prior to this holiday most of her travel had been very local to her home in north Lancashire, with some coach-based holidays around the UK. Her description of the new experience of flying is, perhaps, surprisingly low key – although this was a common element of many of her diary entries – with perhaps the most notable feature being the way in which she used terminology more normally associated with road travel to describe the experience of turbulence in the air:

‘... coach came to pick us up at 12 o’clock, collected up more passengers around Hest Bank on the way to Manchester Airport ... got to Manchester in good time, the travel agent girls saw to everything. Got to Gate 9, there was a fault on the plane so had to return to the lounge ... then boarded the plane at 8pm, Britannia BYA50A to Monastir, the view was lovely over the country and coastline, there were one or two ‘potholes’ ... travelled at 33,000 feet ... Arrived at Monastir airport at 12 o’clock English time, went to Hotel Hannibal Sousse by coach, took half an hour ... marble entrance, and all round the men seemed to be annoyed, probably with us being late.’³⁸

Environment

³⁶ . P. Lyth, “Plane Crazy Brits: Aeromobility, Climate Change and the British Traveller”, in C. Divall, J. Hine and C. Pooley (Eds.), *Transport Policy: Learning Lessons from History* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2016), 171-84.

³⁷ . Except for a day trip to France while staying on the south coast of England.

³⁸ . Author’s personal collection, Diary of Betty, age 60, Saturday 21 January 1989.

A novel environment could engender unusually strong emotions when travelling, but the influence of environment could extend well beyond novelty alone. As noted above, weather could play an important role in the way in which travel through a particular environment was experienced, together with such factors as the scenery, perceived risks or romantic encounters that occurred during the journey. Any such factors could serve to make a journey more memorable and produce a longer than usual diary entry. The diary of an anonymous female traveller in mid-Wales in 1833 indicates the grandeur of the landscape, and the distinctiveness of both the physical and human environments made a deep impression on her. There is no sense that she was concerned about risk but, rather, that she enjoyed the memorable experience:

We left Rhayader about one being obliged to take 4 horses on account of the roughness & hilliness of the road we went by the old road to Hefod. The weather had cleared up & the scenery was magnificent. Our road wound up a high mountain on one side of it were steep bold rocks rising perpendicularly above us on the other a precipitous descent down into the valley beneath where the little huts & cottages were seen thinly scattered whilst high mountains were on the other side of the vale. We continued descending for four miles amongst a continual change of most grand scenery the numerous mountain streams often crossing our path & rushing in long waterfalls down the valley where they joined the Illion & afterwards the Ithwith. During this stage we first met with the inhabitants who spoke the Welsh Language only.³⁹

Elizabeth Lee's diary entry in July 1888 is one of many in which the romantic associations of a walk were an important part of the experience. In this instance she had been out until late with both male and female friends, but the walk home with one of the men - probably combined with the late hour and the moonlit night - seemed especially significant to her: 'After supper we had dancing, singing,

³⁹ . Wigan and Leigh Archives, Leigh, Lancashire, UK, Edward Hall collection, EHC/96, Diary of an anonymous women, mid-Wales, 10 August 1833.

games and forfeits. Belle and I had such fun with Mr. Robinson. We had fun coming home, Mr. R. walked with me. Lovely and moonlight. Got home 3 a.m".⁴⁰ The significance of landscape and memory in a journey to a particular destination is clearly demonstrated by the 1954 diary entry of Gillian Caldwell as she travelled back to her remote upland Cumberland parental home after a short holiday with relatives in Manchester. Her affection for the mountains of the English Lake District and for the people in her community is obvious, and the anticipation of being back amongst the landscape and people she loved best seemed to make the journey especially memorable:

At last I found myself on the puffer coming home after putting it off for days. Much as I have enjoyed my holiday, I'm as excited as ever at the prospect of getting home. I can't explain how I feel - not even to myself – on paper what I feel like when I see the mountains for the first time after a week. The journey was very quiet and I should think that after Millom I was about the only person on the train. Dear old Affie met me at the station – with her dog.⁴¹

Travelling companions

When travelling on public transport of any kind, the people that accompany you can have a considerable impact on the pleasure, or discomfort, associated with the journey. These may be people that are chosen as travelling companions, or they may simply be other travellers that occupy the same space as you. The diary entries studied include several entries in which the influence of travelling companions affected the memorability of a journey. In particular, crowded conditions could make an otherwise uneventful or routine journey both distinctive and less pleasant than anticipated. This appeared to be the case for John Lee in 1860 when he was travelling back to Burnley (Lancashire) after a day out. Although he was not unduly perturbed, the long delay and

⁴⁰ . Pooley et al., *Diary of Elizabeth Lee*, age 21, Merseyside, Wednesday 25 July 1888.

⁴¹ . BIA GDP/1, *Diary of Gillian Caldwell*, age 15, Thursday 24 April 1952.

crowded conditions at the station while he awaited a train home appeared to make an impression on him, and must have somewhat tarnished an otherwise enjoyable day out:

When we got to the station, it was completely crammed. It his [sic] in a cutting and all up the side were groups squatting and waiting patiently. I had to wait about 3 hours in the open air, when very fortunately I got into a first class carriage. Set off about 10 o'clock and it was 2 the next morning before I arrived at Burnley.⁴²

For Elizabeth Lee in 1886 her experience of crowds of (mainly) men all travelling on the newly opened rail tunnel under the river Mersey provided both positive and negative emotions. She complained mildly about the crush of people but at the same time clearly enjoyed the experience – especially the company of so many young men. Such mixed emotions to a range of experiences when travelling were not uncommon:

Fine day. The railway under the Tunnel was opened for traffic today and I went to L'pool by it. I went up in the "lift" when I got to L'pool and there was such a frightful crush to get it. Had a good look round L'pool and came back by train. Such a lot of gentleman in the station. It was so jolly but I got nearly squashed to death.⁴³

Gillian Caldwell recorded a variety of feelings towards her fellow passengers when travelling by train from Nottingham to her home in Cumberland. She seemed to want to be able to converse with her fellow passengers, and on one leg of the journey she complained about an uncommunicative and (in her eyes) bad tempered) male passenger in her compartment. However, she was much happier when for the last portion of the journey an apparently more friendly and communicative male traveller joined her:

⁴² . Author's personal collection, Diary of John Lee, age 18, Lancashire, 1 September 1 1860.

⁴³ . Pooley et al., *Diary of Elizabeth Lee*, age 18, Merseyside, Monday 1 February 1 1886.

Finally got my horrible suitcase to the station and got there in plenty of time. We were in Leeds before I knew where I was and just caught my connection at Skipton. Got in a compartment with a horrible male with no word to say for himself. On arriving at Carnforth I found I had an hour to wait and finally got in the train with another male who was far more sociable [Travelling home from Nottingham].⁴⁴

Conclusions

This paper has only limited aims. It does not attempt to chart changes in mobility over time or between social groups and regions, and it does not provide more than outline pen-pictures of the ten diarists cited. Rather, it has two principal aims. First, to demonstrate that by using life writing such as that contained in personal diaries, it is possible to recover at least some of the feelings and responses generated by everyday travel at different times in the past. Information gained in this way will be partial and fragmentary as diarists would be unlikely to record all their feelings, deeper emotions are rarely revealed, and we have no knowledge of what events and experiences diarists chose to omit. Entries also, obviously, reflect the different ages and personalities of individual writers. For instance, Annie Rudolph in London was clearly an outgoing young lady who was confident expressing her feelings in words, while Mary Leesmith (approximately 10 years older and also travelling in London) tended to write mainly factual entries with less explicit personal content. Although diary extracts may be less focused and complete than material gained from interviews or accompanied journeys in contemporary mobility studies, it is unlikely that any interviewee will ever reveal all their emotions and feelings.

The second aim of the paper is to argue that uncovering the ways in which travellers experienced their journeys should be an important part of the study of transport history, and must sit equally alongside the analysis of such themes as transport technologies, timetables, modal shifts

⁴⁴ . BIA GDP/1, Diary of Gillian Caldwell, age 17, Tuesday 12 January 1954.

and transport inequalities. There are good reasons why such an approach is important. The ways in which travellers experience the journeys that they make, and the feelings and emotions that are generated, are part of a feedback loop that affects their future travel behaviour and, potentially, the travel choices of their relatives and friends. A negative experience of a journey may cause the relevant transport mode to be neglected in favour of alternatives (if they exist), or it might reduce the propensity to travel at all. Information passed to contacts could have a similar (if lesser) impact. The ways in which travellers experience the journeys they make can have impacts on the whole transport system, and thus needs to be analysed alongside all other components. A focus on the traveller rather than just on transport can also enrich the discipline of transport history. It not only enables transport historians to engage constructively with the vibrant field of mobility studies with potential benefits for both disciplines, but also is of value in itself and extends the reach and content of transport studies in exciting ways.

Although the extracts cited in this paper are a selection of those that could be included, and they represent only a small portion of society and travel experience, they do suggest that there may be considerable similarities in the ways in which journeys are experienced across space, time and different social groups. Most diarists studied cited examples of the ways in which their journeys were impacted, either positively or negatively, by factors such as the weather, accidents, delays, companions, the environment through which they passed and the novelty of an experience. Although each diarist would have experienced these factors in their own individual ways, and they may have drawn different conclusions from the events described, it seems that at least some of the factors that provoked notable responses to travel are universal. For all the above reasons I argue that a greater spotlight on the traveller rather than the transport should form a central focus of the study of transport history.

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