

## SPECIAL ISSUE

# Recording and Remembering Migration and Mobility: How and Why Do Recollections Gained from Oral History Differ from Entries in Personal Diaries?

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### Abstract

This paper uses diaries and oral history to assess the ways in which memory may alter accounts of migration and mobility. The diarist was born in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, and in 1938, at the age of 18, she migrated to London (England) to work as a typist for the Inland Revenue. Her detailed diaries provide a vivid account of her migration and her subsequent life and mobility in London. Some 60 years after she came to London the diarist was interviewed in her own home, and was asked about her recollections of migration and of her new life in London. The paper focuses on three themes: the initial migration from Londonderry to London, building a life and travel in London, and her continued links to Ireland. For the most part the diary entries and the oral history account are very similar. The main differences relate to the ways in which some aspects, especially those linked to fear and uncertainty, have changed over time, with some worries fading but others becoming more pronounced, and through the impact of later acquired knowledge changing the diarist's interpretation of events. It is concluded that both diaries and oral history can provide reasonably reliable and consistent accounts of past migration and mobility.

### Keywords

Diaries, Oral history, Migration, Mobility, Memory, Ireland, London.

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## Introduction

Memory structures the construction of almost all historical evidence. Historians of migration and mobility have used a range of different approaches to reconstruct past mobilities. These include the use of oral history techniques to develop a narrative of the life-time movements of a respondent, and the analysis of diaries and other forms of life writing that provide information on everyday travel. While diaries were usually written up at the end of each day, or at least soon after an event, life histories rely on recollections made in old age. In this paper I use evidence from one very detailed set of diaries, together with information collected from an in-depth interview with the diarist towards the end of her life, to compare how recollected memories of mobility compare to an account that was written at the time, and to consider the likely reasons for such differences in the context of one person's life.

The limits and difficulties of using oral evidence are well-known (Lummis; Perks; Perks and Thomson; Ritchie; Thompson). Any research which is dependent on the memory of individual respondents must consider the fact that all recollections are coloured by later experiences. The further back in time the events being recalled, the more likely it is that memories will have become selective. It is not suggested that respondents provide incorrect information or deliberately mislead. It is simply a fact that any recollection of an event which took place some 60 years ago is likely to be rather different from the perception of that event at the time. Such problems are regularly addressed in the many pieces of research which use oral evidence (Abrams; Fields; Thomson; Thomson, Frisch and Hamilton). Information written at the time an event took place, in the form of a diary or account, is equally subjective. A diarist may have deliberately chosen to record or emphasise certain aspects of an experience, and other events, perhaps considered of no importance at the time, may have been ignored. These problems are also well known and have been examined by many researchers who have analysed evidence from diaries and other personal documents (Fothergill; Heehs; Hewitt; Lejeune; Moran; Nausbaum; Sherman). Neither source of information is more accurate than the other: they simply provide different interpretations of events. One is a reflection of memories of an event at a distance, filtered through a lifetime of experiences; the other records feelings almost at the time the event took place, an immediate statement of what seemed important in a particular moment. Although there are numerous studies that use either oral evidence or personal diaries, it is rare to have a detailed diary record and oral evidence from the same person and covering the same events. It is therefore difficult to assess the extent to which oral and written evidence may provide different interpretations of the same histories. There have been some attempts to assess the reliability of memory in other fields, including epidemiological investigations of diet (Ambrosini et al.; Dwyer and Coleman; Van Leeuwen et al.; Jensen et al.) and the nature of evidence in legal cases (Cooper et al.; Hohl and Conway; Murphy). It

has also been argued that memories of traumatic events differ from other recollections (Brewin). In addition, Oral historians have considered many aspects of the creation of an interview, including the validation of transcripts by respondents (Emmerson and Pollner; Echevarria-Howe), and the comparison of remembered evidence with information drawn from other sources (Friedman; Stephens). However, as far as I am aware, few studies have directly compared oral and written evidence provided by the same person about the same events.

This paper is based on information contained in a set of very detailed personal diaries and an extended interview with the diarist undertaken almost 60 years after the diary was compiled. The diaries were made available as part of a project on the longitudinal analysis of residential life histories using data collected from family historians and genealogists (Pooley and Turnbull). Although our respondent was happy to be identified and quoted, all other references to individuals have been anonymised. The interview was structured around the respondent's life history, but focused on key events which had emerged from a previous analysis of the diary. When these were not mentioned spontaneously the respondent was prompted to talk about a particular topic. The respondent had not read the diary recently and she did not consult the diary during the interview. Using these two sources it is possible to compare different perceptions of selected events, and assess the extent to which oral evidence may give an impression which is different from that recorded at the time the events took place. It is, of course, impossible to know if the account given during the interview would have been different without prompting.

## Background

Rhona Little was born into a middle-class Protestant family in Londonderry (as she called it) in 1919, and the diaries cover the period 1932-1959. The most detailed entries run from 1937 to 1942, during which time she migrated alone from Londonderry to London to work as a typist with the Inland Revenue, having passed the Civil Service typing exams in Ireland. This is the period analysed in the paper, covering the process of migration and adjustment to life in London of a young, single, Protestant Northern Irish woman between the ages of 18 and 23. In total the diaries run to some 19 volumes, with 1938 alone (the year she moved to London) covering four large hand-written volumes. The level of detail included in the diaries between 1937 and 1942 is extraordinary. They were clearly written up each evening, and record almost everything that Rhona did during the day, including where she went, whom she was with, what food she ate (and how much it cost), what books she read, the films she saw, and her thoughts, hopes and fears. In particular they provide a vivid insight into the process of migration, her feelings on leaving home, and her adjustment to life and work in London. Although it is relatively common for a young woman to keep a personal diary (Crowther; Raoul), these records are unusual in their detail and consistency over a

prolonged period, in the fact that they have survived some sixty years and have been made available for historical analysis, and in the degree to which they provide information on the process of migration and adjustment to life in London. The diaries were clearly written as a personal document, with no expectation that they would ever be read by anyone else.

Rhona never returned to live in Northern Ireland and had spent most of her life in London, where the interview was conducted in March 1996 at the diarist's home. The semi-structured discussion produced approximately two and a half hours of tape and focused on the period of migration from Londonderry and adjustment to life in London. The interview probed what appeared to be key events recorded in the diary, while also allowing the respondent to introduce new information and perspectives. For the most part, the respondent appeared to have a clear memory of the past, in that most factual details stated in the interview tallied with entries in the diary. However, there were subtle differences in emphasis about the way in which she felt about certain events. This paper focuses on Rhona's perception of three aspects of her life between 1937 and 1942: the process of leaving home and the initial adjustment to life in London; the construction of a new life in London and her mobility around the city during her first three years of residence; and the extent of her continued identity with and attachment to Northern Ireland after migrating to London. In each of these areas, differences between the written diary record and responses based on memory are explored.

### From Londonderry to London

Although there was a well-established pattern of migration from Ireland to London and elsewhere (Bielenberg; King; Lees; O'Sullivan; Swift and Gilley; Trew; Walter), such long-distance movement might be expected to be quite traumatic, especially for an 18-year-old girl leaving home for the first time. The fact that Rhona Little had been studying for the Civil Service typing exam in Londonderry since the age of 16 meant that she had known for some time that she would be going to London. This was a common experience for young women in Northern Ireland and Rhona's simple, factual diary entries demonstrate an apparent lack of strong emotion or concern about leaving home. However, she was eager to discover which Civil Service department she would go to, and she became anxious when other girls had heard and she had not. Rhona also appeared to have little agency over her move to London, as all arrangements were made by her parents or her school. A series of extracts from Rhona Little's diary made between 10th and 22nd January 1938 illustrate these points:

K. M. has got her call. She is going to the Inland Revenue in London in a fortnight's time. J. S. has gone or is going to the Law Courts and another girl called D. has gone to Scotland Yard. I wonder

where I will go? (Diaries January 10, 1938)

She [a schoolmate] is crossing on Saturday night. She is in Bloomsbury Law Courts. I wonder where I will go. I am feeling vaguely nervous because I have had no news since the medical examination. (Diaries January 14, 1938)

This morning I received a letter saying that I was appointed as typist to the Inland Revenue Somerset House. We went to school as usual. (Diaries January 17, 1938)

Went to school today. I sent my reply to the Civil Service. (Diaries January 18, 1938)

Mamma wrote to the Civil Service Association about Hostels. Daddy got me two pairs of pyjamas. (Diaries January 20, 1938)

This afternoon I got a letter from the Civil Service, saying to report at Room 129a to a Miss P. at New Wing, Somerset House, to take up duty at 10.a.m. Mamma and I went to Austin's to get a costume but they were all too big or too small. I got a dressing gown, a corselet, and a pair of knickers. (Diaries January 22, 1938)

Oral evidence collected when Rhona Little was in her late-70s largely confirms the diary entries. In response to questions about the process of leaving home she simply said:

Nobody ever asked me, nobody asked me at all what I wanted to do. To be perfectly honest I didn't have any great thoughts, any great ambitions . . . Whatever they said was the right thing. I wouldn't have dreamed I wasn't going to do it . . . I didn't do anything. I was a passive thing. (Interview)

The days prior to Rhona's departure were spent shopping for new clothes and saying goodbye to friends and relatives who lived nearby. The only occasion when she appeared to express some degree of dismay was when she was told that her mother was not to travel with her to London, but rather that her father would accompany her. Another local family that Rhona knew was also travelling over at the same time. The diary entries suggest that most of Rhona's daily interactions were with her mother rather than with her father, and she probably felt much closer to her mother. Two diary entries from late-January describe Rhona's activities immediately prior to departure and the process of leaving Ireland for the first time.

I fixed up some of my clothes. I heard for the first time that Daddy was going over instead of Mamma with me and I felt awfully angry and weepy because Mamma wasn't going to come with me. I started to put a zip fastener in my gym frock. Our new dresses came this evening and they are lovely and so is my little white blouse. The weather is quite bad. Rain and very cold. (Diaries January 26, 1938)

This morning I went with L. [sister] to S's to say goodbye to all. I spent quite a while with Misses L. and C. I said goodbye to M. too. Then I went to say goodbye to the girls, and last of all Mr H. and I went at dinner time to get my new skirt of Miss G. and said goodbye to them. I got a nice new case with my initials on it. I did nothing much until I said goodbye to them all. L. and M. went with me to the station and H. came up at the last moment. We got on the train and K. and her papa came in with us. The journey to Belfast was very nice and quick. I said goodbye to Miss M. and B. It rained hard all the time. The boat is called Duke of Argyll and is very nice. We had tea

and toast at supper. It was lovely going out. I had better go to sleep now as the boat is beginning to heave badly. The name of the ship is "Duke of Argyll." The name of the train was Edward VII or VIII, I don't know which. I did not go to bed until 10.15. I stayed on deck with Daddy, K. and Mr M. I did not get to sleep for ages and then I only slept to 2. o'clock. The ship rolled up and down after we were out of the Lough. The cabins are very nice if rather small. Daddy and Mr M. have a cabin between them while K. and I have the one next to it. No 11. We saw the dining saloon where we all had a supper of tea and toast and bread and butter. I was not sick at all coming over. We are here at Heysham now. It is nearly 6 o'clock now and it is really Saturday. The rain was dreadful coming in the train and when we went to the boat. (Diaries January 28, 1938)

Oral evidence from some 60 years later conveys the same impression that leaving home and her family was not especially troubling, though in the interview Rhona made no mention of feeling sad that her mother was not accompanying her on the journey. She also suggested that her lack of concern was related to an expectation that her sister would also be coming to London when she was older, and that she could easily return, although these thoughts were never recorded in the diary. In response to questions about leaving home, Rhona said:

Oh dear. it is difficult. I think I just went. I'd got to go so I just went. Of course, it was all new and exciting in a way. I had never been to England. I'd never been to London. ... I suppose I thought that L. [sister] was coming after, and it wasn't going to be for so long and that I would be able to come back. I suppose in a kind of way I didn't really think of it as leaving ... curious really ...what did I think? ... I think it was a big adventure. (Interview)

Rhona quickly settled into her new accommodation in a YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) hostel in Earls Court and negotiated her first day at work without undue difficulty, helped in part by the presence of other young women in the hostel. Her father stayed in London over the weekend and Rhona met him after her first day at the Inland Revenue and said goodbye. Again, the factual diary entry suggests no strong emotions:

This morning I got up rather late at 7.40. I had only 10 minutes to be ready for breakfast. We had egg this morning. After that I had a little time before I had to start for work. I met D. T. and we went and got our tickets 3/- (15p). We walked through a little green place and up to Somerset House. D. took me to the New Wing. ... We got out a 4.50, at least I was a bit later. I had to fly to catch Daddy at Charing Cross Station. I reached him a bit late. Then we went into Lyons Corner House where we had tea and roll. Then Daddy took me to Woolworths, where I got 2 cups, saucers and plates, 1 spoon 1 knife & 1 fork. Then he gave me £1. Then he took me back to the underground and I said goodbye. I got back to the house and M. and I had tea together. (Diaries January 31, 1938).

In contrast, the oral evidence provided by Rhona suggests that saying goodbye to her father and being left alone in London was a more daunting prospect than suggested by the diary entries. In response to a question about her feelings at this time, Rhona responded:

It was a whole mixture. A bit nervous. I'm all by myself. Here I was sat down in Charing Cross station... Here I was, what was I going to do. So I thought I had better go back to the hostel. What else can I do. I didn't know anybody. I went back to the hostel and sat in the corner. I remember then thinking how very . . . it was all so strange. Because I didn't even know the girls in the hostel, not really. (Interview)

However, when pressed about what she missed about Londonderry, the only concern that she expressed in the interview was related to the availability of food. She clearly missed her mother's home cooking and often had to provide for herself in the hostel. Otherwise, her memories were that she quickly came to enjoy life in London and had no desire to return to Londonderry.

What I missed most of course was enough to eat. That was one of the big troubles of landing entirely on your own, you were no longer . . . you had to buy your food. You could make yourself sandwiches . . . but I'm not sure that was looked on very favourably. I don't remember us being able to cook anything at all in Eardley Crescent. You had to go out to buy something. I definitely missed the access to food.

CP: But there wasn't very much about Londonderry that you missed.

No, no. I never remember missing anywhere. The wonders of London were enough to satisfy me. I was delighted with London. (Interview)

Rhona clearly enjoyed her food and what she ate, and how she accessed it figured quite highly in her diary. She was obviously not used to cooking for herself and initially was not sure how to find lunch while at work. Her diary also recorded her initial apprehension about meeting new people in the hostel, and she also complained about an uncomfortable bed. Rhona's diary entries for the day that she and her father arrived in London convey her initial impressions:

We arrived in London at 12.15. It is very bleak looking (the station) and after the style of Belfast station, only bigger. The we went in a bus to near Earls Court. When we got off we had a good bit of walking and my arm ached with holding my things. The road to Earls Court was very interesting. Full of people, buses, cars and great big shops. We arrived at last at Eardley Crescent. We saw the room which I am to occupy. I am sharing a room with a M. A. and A. F. . . . then we went to the shop and had tea . . . When we arrived back I went to the hostel and Daddy to his place. I went down to the sitting room which was full of girls that I did not know. I felt very shy. I spent the evening there until after 10. Then I came into the room where I was to stay. M. was making supper, she gave me some. It was rather late when I went to bed. The bed is an awful affair, all lumps. (Diaries January 29, 1938)

Evidence from the interview provides a very similar picture of Rhona's arrival in London and her reception at the hostel:

Terrific size and great distance, and all these lovely red buses, marvellous red buses. And the sunshine, that really amazed me, and the distances from one place to another. And another thing

was the fact that nobody knew you, ... another thing that struck me very much when I arrived at this hostel, tired, very tired, ... I was tired carrying the case ... we were a pair of innocents abroad, oh dear, and we arrived at this hostel and knocked at the door, and nobody rushed to open it, and when we got in you felt as though you were definitely a stranger, nobody offered you a cup of tea. Do you know that. I thought this was very peculiar. You sort of introduced yourself and said a few words, and there was no tea. (Interview)

Overall, the diary and oral evidence provide very similar accounts of Rhona Little's migration from Londonderry to London, and of her initial arrival in the city and the hostel in which she was staying. There are small differences in the ways in which potentially emotional or difficult situations were recorded or remembered, with only the diary noting concern about her mother not travelling to London, but with the oral evidence suggesting greater concern when initially saying goodbye to her father. However, these discrepancies are small and for the most part the diary and oral evidence reinforce each other but provide slightly different perspectives on the same events.

### **Building a Life and Travelling in London**

One of the difficulties with oral evidence is the assessment of the role of memory. To what extent are some events remembered more vividly than others, and what is the incidence of misremembered events (Barclay and Wellman)? For instance, are major events remembered more clearly than minor everyday occurrences? In most respects, Rhona's memory of her move and first impressions of London tally closely with the diary entries. This was a major event in her life and one she was unlikely to forget. However, once resident in London, it might be suggested that the everyday aspects of her new life would be less clear, and memories would merge together. It is thus of interest to compare the daily diary record of everyday life and mobility in London with oral recollections. Rhona's world in London centred mainly around her home and workplace. She had friends in both locations, but rarely saw workmates outside of office hours. Most of her outings to the theatre, cinema, parks and other places were initially with friends in the hostel. When her sister L. joined her in London in 1939, they moved to a rented room in Canonbury (north London), and most of Rhona's activities were then undertaken in her sister's company.

Once she had been in London for a few weeks, Rhona seemed happy to move around the city freely. She tended to stick to well-established routes, but rarely expressed any fears about travelling alone. When she did go to a new area, she often recorded in her diary that she was pleasantly surprised by how nice it seemed. A diary entry made after some three months in London provides an account of her routine and excursions around the city after a Saturday morning at work. In particular, she commented on the characteristics of the East End and the guard rails that had been erected to restrict pedestrian crossing places and thus improve the flow of traffic (Rooney).



This morning I woke up as usual at 6, and went to sleep again, but instead of waking again at 7 I never opened an eye to 7.45. Did I get out of bed quick? I think I broke all my records for quick dressing. I was very busy this morning and did nearly the right amount of work. I went to Lyons for my lunch which I liked quite well. I then decided to do some exploring. I bought a 1/- (5p) tram ticket and went off to Hampstead Heath. I arrived at South End Road Gate. There was a Punch and Judy show. I gave 1d (0.4p). It was very good. It was a very elaborate version of the simple story and had various comic turns mixed up in it. I had a good walk about the Heath. It is very nice but there are far too many people about it. The weather was somewhat cool. I ended up by coming out at the tram terminus at Highgate. I took a trip from there right past the East India Dock. The route there is most interesting and you do see some queer looking people. There is one place I noticed which was very Jewish. It was all not at all like what I thought the East End was. It is very nice indeed in parts. I arrived back in Earls Court in time for dinner. After dinner I did some knitting and writing. The roadways are all railed in in the East-end and there are only openings for crossings. (Diaries May 7, 1938)

These feelings of security, safety and curiosity about new areas are confirmed by the oral evidence. Rhona's remembered account of exploring London suggests a degree of enterprise through her use of the underground to explore the city, but with some awareness of risk in areas that she rarely visited.

During the first year I tended to go on the underground because I, by going on the underground I used to get out at every station in turn and look round and go back, so that in the end I connected up all the places together. Of course, London was so big. And after a year or so, then I started to go on the buses. Because then I was able to have a map in my head of what London was. I was able to find my way around.

CP: Were there any bits of London that you disliked?

I don't remember anywhere I disliked . . . What could I dislike? No, I don't think so. Most places you know, if they were sort of insalubrious, I probably thought I would like to go back and have another look.

CP: Did you ever go out to the East End.

I think the most I ever went was down the Commercial Road once and the East India Dock. When you got beyond the Commercial Road and the East India Dock you began to think you ran into places like China town . . . we used to think they were full of people who were white slave traffickers, you know, that was the big thing. You would be nervous in case someone tried to carry you off for the white slave traffic. That was the great thing.

CP: Were you ever afraid when you were travelling around London on your own?

I was quite safe. It never crossed my mind for a minute that I wasn't safe. The only time I thought I was unsafe was once in the Strand Theatre when a man was trying to pick me up. He bought me an ice cream, he was being, you know, very friendly. I was a bit nervous then. I thought well, you know, I was a very nervous person in that way. You know, I imagined that . . . somebody was about to stick a needle into you and carry you off again to the white slave traffic. (Interview)

Once again, although the written and oral evidence provide very similar messages there are subtle differences. Rhona expressed no feelings of fear in her diary, and there is no evidence that she ever felt threatened. Although this is broadly confirmed by the oral evidence, she also adds a caveat that there were some occasions and places in which she

was fearful. In particular, she refers twice to so-called “white slave” trafficking. This was primarily a late-19th century scare, with legislation in the early 20th century to curb any such trade (Attwood). It is most likely that these oral references were generated by later knowledge rather than from specific concerns in the late-1930s. Certainly there are no mentions of the issue in the diary. It could also be the case that the continued experience of living in London in the late-20th century, and the media publicity given to crime, has led the respondent to give more emphasis to her fears than those that existed at the time. Alternatively, it may simply be that such fears were so minor and rare that she did not bother to mention them in a diary.

The coming of war and sustained air raids on London were obviously a major disruption to everyday life (Bell; Freedman). However, Rhona seemed determined that wartime conditions would affect her as little as possible. She was adamant that she would stay in London, travel much as she usually did, and thus maintain as many normal activities as possible. She volunteered enthusiastically as an air raid shelter marshal, and found that wartime conditions brought her into contact with a wider range of people in Canonbury (where she lived), which gave added excitement and purpose to her life. For instance, in 1942 one diary entry was: “Lovely day of putting out fires, crawling about and holding branches from hydrants and motor pumps. Beautiful time” (Diaries March 16, 1942). However, during the period of most intense air raids from September 1940 many diary pages were empty or just read “Air Raids.” During this time, her usual activities were clearly severely restricted and at times she was very scared. For instance, one diary entry read: “Air raids. Nearly scared out of my wits by bombs in road before warning. All ran like mad. Terrible day generally.” (Diaries September 13, 1940).

These feelings are only partially confirmed by the oral evidence. Rhona looked back on the air raids with some degree of horror, but she also seemed to play down the extent to which she was scared and her life was disrupted. Her retrospective view of the London blitz seemed somewhat more positive than at least some of her diary entries at the time indicated. It is possible that she had deliberately allowed traumatic events experienced in wartime London to fade into the background.

CP: And you never considered leaving (London)?

No. It's very funny really isn't it? I suppose I would have missed it. All the horrors ... I just thought I wanted to stay.

CP: Did you find it exciting in some ways?

Oh yes. Thrilling. I mean, it is thrilling. Um, well, deadly thrilling really. It made life too exciting. Life was exciting. If you heard the bombs coming you started counting.

CP: But you weren't particularly scared?

Not really, Perhaps I.... I don't know. Why wasn't I scared? Well, I was slightly scared if one got too ... well, I was as good as the next person at running.

CP: But the war did not really restrict your movements or stop you going out and doing things?

No. Only so far as you know you couldn't get to the place, or the bus had stopped running, or the place was closed. (Interview)

## Creating a Transnational Identity

There is a large literature on the ways in which migrants may develop a transnational identity through which they maintain close links to their origin area and culture whilst also fitting easily into their host community (Vertovec *Transnationalism* and "Transnationalism and Identity"; Clavin; Mitchell). In the final section of this paper, I use diary and oral evidence to assess the extent to which Rhona Little maintained links with Northern Ireland while also being firmly settled in London, how this affected her sense of identity as a young Northern Irish woman living in London, and the extent to which diary and oral evidence reinforce each other. Strictly speaking, Rhona was not a transnational migrant as she moved from one part of the United Kingdom to another. However, I suggest that the strong and distinct nature of Northern Irish identity (Trew) within the context of both the UK and the Irish Republic replicates many of the features that are common to migrants who moved from one nation state to another, especially where there was a history of colonialism and internal colonialism (Hechter).

Throughout her time in London Rhona Little maintained close contact with her family in Londonderry with frequent letters and (usually) annual visits home. Her first visit home took place from 9th-24th July 1938, less than six months after she arrived in London. Although in most respects Rhona's diary gives the impression that she settled quickly into life in London, and that she had little time for homesickness, the visit home clearly reminded her of the things she missed, and it produced an unusually emotional diary entry on the day that she travelled back to London:

Round about this time I lost control of my feelings and felt altogether dreadful. I said goodbye to everyone . . . It was awful having to go away. I went. ... I felt like weeping when I said goodbye to Daddy. (Diaries July 24, 1938)

In contrast, just a few months later in September 1938 as war with Germany began to seem ever more certain, Rhona strongly expressed the view that London was her home and that she had no intention of returning home, even though this was what many of the other Irish girls she knew were intending to do. In particular, Rhona valued the freedom that she had in London to do as she wished.

Nearly all the Irish and Scotch girls say that if there is a war they are going home. Did you ever hear of such a cowardly lot! There are, however, a few people like myself who would stay here. (Diaries September 14, 1938)

I wonder why all the girls here are simply dying to get home for good? I see only a very few advantages and a whole lot of disadvantages. The chief is, I think, that I would not be able to do exactly as I like. (Diaries September 15, 1938)

The oral evidence largely confirms this interpretation, although in retrospect Rhona did not admit to ever being upset when leaving Ireland after her first visit home. She did, however, suggest that it took her a year to become fully settled in London.

CP: When you went home did that make you more homesick. Were there things at home that you realised you missed in London?

Oh, I don't remember not wanting to go back. No I always wanted to go back.

CP: When would you say that you felt that London was your home?

Oh, after a year or so. When the war came I never thought of going home. I don't remember anybody at home saying why aren't you coming home . . . I would have said I was beginning to become a native, yes, I liked London. (Interview)

Rhona Little was born just two years before the partition of Ireland in 1921 (Coakley and O'Dowd) and her experience of growing up in a Protestant family in Northern Ireland might be expected to enable her to adjust easily to the British society and culture that she encountered in London (O'Sullivan; Walter). Both the diary and oral interview can be used to assess how Rhona constructed her Northern Irish identity after her migration to London. In her diary, Rhona combines a general interest in most things Irish, with a clear set of views on religious, political and class divisions within Ireland. She commented on the number of Irish girls in the hostel, on listening to a band playing Irish airs, at one time has a Catholic male friend, and finds an IRA speaker at Hyde Park Corner "amusing." However, on several occasions she strongly defends her Unionist views:

Miss W. started about an United Ireland so I went against her as vigorously and as vehemently as I could. (Diaries October 18, 1938)

After lunch I wasted a bit of time because there was an argument on about whether Northern Ireland would join with the Free State. (Diaries April 27, 1939)

She [J. at evening classes] gave a little talk on the 'I.R.A.' as the topic of the week. Unfortunately, she nor anybody else never touched the whole point of the subject which is just religion. (Diaries March 13, 1939)

From the diary entries, the picture which emerges is of a Protestant from Northern Ireland who, though clearly identifying with the Union with Britain, was also prepared to listen to alternative views and have friends who were Catholic.

While reinforcing some of these themes, the oral evidence has a slightly different emphasis. Remembering her life in Londonderry before migration, she notes that her family had

middle-class Catholic friends, even though her father was committed to the Presbyterian church and the Orange Order in Londonderry (her mother was Church of Ireland), and that religious differences were of minor importance:

Yes we had Catholic friends. The butcher . . . were great friends of ours. Mrs Q. was a very nice woman, and her daughter H. taught us music . . . There was no difference . . . And there were Catholic friends of Daddy's someone who had been in the war, a soldier . . . I think they were the two principal ones. And there were the Ds. . . were the D's Roman Catholic . . . you know, they were such nice people, we, we were such friends with them, it never really crossed my mind, . . . I wouldn't really like to say. It wasn't important . . . Everyone knew you were Roman Catholic or Protestant, but we didn't hate each other at all. (Interview)

However, her responses to specific enquiries about her identity with Northern Ireland and her reception in England were emphatic:

Well, I thought I was British. I thought I was English. I considered myself English. I was British, I wasn't Irish. Not really. Coming from Northern Ireland I was British.

CP: Did you have anything that made you identify with Ireland as a country.

No. Only insofar as I came from Northern Ireland. But I would never have thought of myself as being Irish, not really. I would have thought of myself as having Scottish connections, you know. I went to Scottish dancing at St. Columbo's in S. Ken. and I used to go around with a Scottish girl, I thought I was nearer to the Scottish than to the Southern Irish. I always regarded the Southern Irish as foreigners, that's in my mind. Because they weren't British, not really. (Interview)

What is interesting about these responses is not that they are unexpected, but that they present a slightly different emphasis to that in the diary. Apart from recording soon after her arrival in London that she attended St. Columbo's Church of Scotland, which she described as "a queer mixture of Church of Ireland and Presbyterian church" (Diaries February 6, 1938) there is no mention of any identity with Scottish culture. She does, however, comment on Irish people and Irish culture on several occasions. Not only had Rhona been born in Northern Ireland, but both parents had been born there, and many members of her family remained in the province. Evidence from the two sources suggests that soon after her migration to London she did retain a degree of interest in and identity with both Northern Ireland as part of the Union with Britain, and Irish culture more generally. However, her Protestant background also encouraged her identity with Scottish Presbyterians and, during the succeeding 60 years spent almost entirely in London, her association with English and Scottish culture became more dominant.

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## Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is not to suggest that one source is correct and the other is wrong, nor is it to point up contradictions in the evidence provided by our respondent. Both sets of evidence represent particular perceptions and representations of feelings and events, both depend on memory, and each has been filtered through a rather different set of lenses. They provide specific accounts of mobilities that may in turn shed light on the ways in which migration was experienced and remembered in the context of a lifetime. The diary represents the daily thoughts, priorities, and reflections of a young woman, written close to the time that events occurred. Presumably, she recorded the things that were important to her then, though we have no way of knowing what she decided to leave out and how she made such decisions. The oral evidence, as with all such material, reflects memories that have been structured by the subsequent 60 years of experience. It is thus not surprising that emphases changed and that something which was unimportant to an 18-year-old was remembered as much more important over half a century later, and vice-versa. What is most striking about the evidence contained in the two sources is their similarity. In most cases, they reinforce and reflect each other both in terms of factual detail and the feelings and emotions that are expressed. Differences between the sources almost entirely reflect varied emphases placed on the same event or set of circumstances. What seems to have happened in a number of instances is that while the diary recorded a set of feelings or emotions that seemed important at the time, the oral evidence has retrospectively made decisions about the continuing significance of these feelings. In some instances, the events and emotions have faded into the background and a longer time perspective has given a slightly different view, perhaps conditioned by later experiences. It is rare to have both written diary evidence and later oral testimonies for the same individual. Comparison of these two sources for Rhona Little suggest that her accounts of migration from Northern Ireland to London in the mid-20th century are essentially similar, despite having been constructed some 60 years apart. This research has focused on the testimonies of just one person. Whether other individuals would record, filter, and remember the events of their lives in the same way is unknown. Further research with a wider range of diaries and oral testimonies would be needed to answer this question.

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