

**'Mrs Harvey came home from Norwich ... her pocket picked at the station and all her money stolen': using life writing to recover the experience of travel in the past.**

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**Abstract**

In most societies the ability to move easily from place to place is a taken-for-granted aspect of twenty-first century life, but much less is known about such mobility in the past with a tendency for accounts to focus on the exceptional rather than the routine. In this paper we use two personal diaries written in England in the mid-nineteenth century and early-twentieth centuries to explore the ways in which everyday mobility was accomplished in the past. Attention is focused on the ease with which people could move around, the variety of modes of transport used, the enjoyment that travel generated, and the difficulties that were encountered. It is concluded that frequent everyday mobility was commonplace and mostly unproblematic, and was as closely enmeshed with society and economy as is the case in the twenty-first century. Such mobility also facilitated residential migration by providing knowledge about potential locations.

**Key words**

Mobility; Everyday life; Diaries; England; Nineteenth Century; Twentieth Century

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## **Introduction**

‘Everyday life may be ... synonymous with the habitual, the ordinary, the mundane, yet it is also strangely elusive.’<sup>1</sup>

There is little that is more everyday than travel. Almost all activities that we undertake require movement of some sort: be it on foot, by bike, by car or on public transport. We regularly negotiate complex multi-mode journeys but rarely consider them in detail. Often they are only scrutinised closely when problems occur and a journey cannot be completed as anticipated.<sup>2</sup> If, for the most part, everyday travel is a taken-for-granted part of life, this does not mean that it has escaped academic scrutiny from historical, theoretical and practical perspectives.<sup>3</sup> Ben Highmore<sup>4</sup> traces much work on the everyday in society back to the theories of Georg Simmel, but then expands them through the writings of such theorists as De

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\* Thanks to the archive staff at the Bishopsgate Institute for help with locating relevant diaries.

<sup>1</sup> . R. Felski, ‘The invention of everyday life’, *New Formations* 39 (1999) 15-31, 15.

<sup>2</sup> . C. Pooley, ‘Uncertain mobilities: a view from the past’, *Transfers* 3 (2013) 26-44.

<sup>3</sup> . F. Braudel, *The Structures of Everyday Life* (London 1981); M. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA. 1984); H. Lefebvre, *Everyday life in the modern world* (London 2000); M. Gardiner, *Critiques of everyday life* (London 2000); P. Harrison, ‘Making sense: embodiment and the sensibilities of the everyday’, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 18 (2000) 497-517; L. Holloway and P. Hubbard, *People and place: the extraordinary geographies of everyday life* (Harlow 2001); T. Edinsor, ‘Defamiliarising the mundane roadscape’, *Space and Culture* 6 (2003) 151-168; S. Pink, *Situating everyday life* (London 2012) .

<sup>4</sup> . B. Highmore, *Everyday life and cultural theory: an introduction* (London 2013).

Certeau, Benjamin and Lefebvre and the practical investigations of Mass Observation.<sup>5</sup> However, recreation of the experience of travel in the past is fraught with difficulties by virtue of the fact that such mundane and everyday activities rarely attract enough attention to be recorded: in most instances only exceptional events and experiences are noted, thus potentially distorting the historical record. This tends to be the case with more popular or wide ranging accounts of mobility.<sup>6</sup> Probably the best, and most well-known, exploration of the experience of travel in the past is by Wolfgang Schivelbusch who examined the impact of railways on everyday travel in the USA in the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> Others have also explored the experiences of travelling in the past,<sup>8</sup> but most research on travel and transport has focused on the technologies of travel and/or the infrastructure provided rather than on the individual or collective experience (see for example contents lists of the *Journal of Transport History*).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> . G. Simmel, *Simmel on culture: selected writings* (Boston, MA. 1997); De Certeau, *The practice of everyday life*; Lefebvre, *Everyday life in the modern world*; Mass Observation, <http://www.massobs.org.uk/> (2 March 2015).

<sup>6</sup> . R. Solnit, *Wanderlust: a history of walking* (London 2001); J.Urry, *Mobilities* (Cambridge 2007).

<sup>7</sup> . W. Schivelbusch, *The railway journey: the industrialisation of time and space in the nineteenth century* (Berkeley, CA. 1986).

<sup>8</sup> . P. Norton, 'Urban mobility without wheels: a historiographical review of pedestrianism'. In G. Mom, G., G. Pirie, and C. Tissot (eds.), *Mobility in History: the state of the art in the history of transport, traffic and mobility* (Neuchâtel 2009) 111-115; M. French, 'On the road: travelling salesmen and the experience of mobility in Britain before 1939', *Journal of Transport History* 31 (2010) 133-150; T. Errázuriz, 'When walking became serious: reshaping the role of pedestrians in Santiago, 1900-1931', *Journal of Transport History* 32 (2011) 39-65; B.Schmucki, "'If I walked on my own at night I stuck to well-lit areas". Gendered spaces and urban transport in 20<sup>th</sup> century Britain', *Research in Transportation Economics* 34 (2012) 74-85.

<sup>9</sup> . Journal of Transport History, <http://www.manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/cgi-bin/subscribe?showinfo=ip016> (2 March 2015).

This paper adds to the small literature that exists on the experience of everyday travel in the past by examining key themes that emerge from analysis of two diaries produced by people who lived and travelled in Britain in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. Its focus is on the practical aspects of travel rather than on the theoretical consideration of emotions and experiences, though such empirical investigation provides evidence to support the more theoretical literature of authors such as Simmel, Lefebvre and De Certeau (cited above). The paper has three main aims: first, to demonstrate the utility of life writing for the study of mobility in the past; second, to describe and explain the mobility experiences of two very different diarists; and, third to explore the links between everyday mobility and residential migration. Most migration history has largely ignored everyday mobility. We argue that there is value in exploring the interactions between them in more detail.

Everyday travel for work, education, leisure etc. is far more common than residential migration, but the two forms of movement are also linked. While some residential moves take place over long distances to locations about which a migrant has limited knowledge, or only knowledge acquired through media or networks of friends and kin who have already moved, most residential migration in all places and time periods is over short distances and within an activity space that is likely to be partly familiar to a migrant.<sup>10</sup> In this sense everyday mobility is fundamentally linked to residential migration in that it is one of a number of possible ways in which a migrant gains information about potential locations for a new

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<sup>10</sup> . D. Hoerder and L. P. Moch (eds.), *European migrants: global and local perspectives* (Boston, MA. 1996); C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, *Migration and mobility in Britain since the eighteenth century* (London 1998); L. P. Moch, *Moving Europeans: Migration in Western Europe since 1650* (Bloomington, IN: 2003); C. Harzig and D. Hoerder, *What is migration history?* (Cambridge 2009).

home.<sup>11</sup> Rather than viewing everyday mobility and residential migration as distinct events, it is much more helpful to see them as part of a mobility continuum that encompasses all forms of movement. The experiences of events like short distance everyday mobility feed into, and help to shape, the relatively rarer residential moves that people undertake at particular stages of their lives.<sup>12</sup>

Life writing can take many different forms: most commonly diaries, life histories and letters, though creative writing based upon personal experience can also be seen as part of this genre.<sup>13</sup> All forms of life writing have problems of verification and interpretation.<sup>14</sup> Diaries are likely to be the most immediate, usually written up daily or at least compiled on a regular basis. However, the content of diaries varies enormously from those that record little more than appointments and events to those that provide detailed descriptions of experiences and reflect on life. It is impossible to ever know precisely why any diary was compiled, or what the diarist chose to include or exclude from their account. However, it is reasonable to assume that those diaries compiled by people in positions of power were more likely to be written with a view to eventual publication than were those of more ordinary citizens. Like all life writing, diaries were by definition produced by those who were both literate and, crucially, had sufficient leisure time to keep a diary. In general more diaries survive (and were probably kept) for females than for males, and it has been argued that in the nineteenth

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<sup>11</sup> . J. Wolpert, 'Behavioural aspects of the decision to migrate', *Papers in Regional Science* 15 (1965) 159-169; L. Brown and E. Moore, 'The intra-urban migration process: a perspective', *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography* 52 (1970) 1-13.

<sup>12</sup> . C. Pooley, J. Turnbull and M. Adams, *A mobile century? Changes in everyday mobility in Britain in the twentieth century* (Aldershot 2005) 3.

<sup>13</sup> . S. Smith and J. Watson, *Reading autobiography. A guide for interpreting life narratives* (Minneapolis, MN. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2010).

<sup>14</sup> . For an excellent discussion see J. Humphries, *Childhood and child labour in the British Industrial Revolution* (Cambridge 2010) 12-48.

century diary keeping was a particularly important route by which some women felt able to express themselves in the context of a repressive patriarchal society.<sup>15</sup> Because of their immediacy and concern with everyday life, diaries are more likely than other forms of life writing to regularly report mundane travel and for this reason they form the principal source used in this research. In contrast, life histories, even when compiled from diaries or notebooks completed previously, are likely to be much more selective and, most crucially, are likely to be written with an eye to explaining and justifying past actions. Such life histories were most often written by men and in the nineteenth century frequently were constructed as a narrative with a strong sense of religious purpose derived from Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*.<sup>16</sup> Letters can provide the immediacy of a diary and, if a full correspondence survives, can shed light on relationships, but they are likely to be much more sporadic than diary entries and subject to considerable editorial control. Letters also rarely convey the mundane, and if they mention travel it is likely to be in the context of an exceptional or difficult journey that is reported. Moreover, long runs of letters rarely survive apart from for a small number of prominent figures.<sup>17</sup> Creative writing in the form of novels must clearly be used with caution, but many writers created their stories from personal experience and it can

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<sup>15</sup> . A. Ponsonby, *English diaries: a review of English diaries from the sixteenth to the twentieth century, with an introduction on diary writing* (Ann Arbor, MI. 1923); R. Fothergill, *Private chronicles: a study of English diaries* (London 1974); A Nin and J. Hinz, *A woman speaks: the lectures, seminars and interviews of Anais Nin* (Chicago IL, 1975); A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's daughter: women's lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, CT. 1998); P. Lejeune, *On diary* (Honolulu, HI. 2009).

<sup>16</sup> . A. Fleishman, *Figures of autobiography: the language of self-writing in Victorian and modern England* (Berkeley, CA. 1983); W. Runyan, *Life histories and psychobiography: explorations in theory and method* (Oxford 1984); H. Henderson, *The Victorian Self: autobiography and Biblical narrative* (Ithaca, NY. 1989); C. Steedman, *Past tenses: essays on writing, autobiography and history* (London 1992).

<sup>17</sup> . D. Cousineau, *Letters and labyrinths: Women writing/cultural codes*, (Newark, NJ. 1997); M. Jolly and L. Stanley, 'Letters as/not a genre', *Life Writing* 2 (2005) 91-118; M. Jolly, *In love and struggle: Letters in contemporary feminism* (New York 2008).

be argued that authors such as Jane Austen, Charles Dickens, Thomas Hardy, George Eliot and George Gissing can provide important insights into how people travelled in the past.<sup>18</sup>

A number of recent studies have used autobiographies to offer fresh interpretations of past society and economy,<sup>19</sup> but (as outlined above) research on travel using any form of life writing has focused mainly on what could be seen as exceptional journeys. It is these experiences that are most likely to be recorded. For instance study of international migration has benefited from the use of immigrants' letters home. Such correspondence was often intended for wide circulation among family and friends and, sometimes, even for publication in the local press. It can provide both an account of the journey and, especially, of experiences on arrival, though there is considerable evidence that some migrants at least were prone to exaggerate their accounts, usually suggesting that things were better than was actually the case.<sup>20</sup> In the nineteenth century emigrants often deliberately kept a diary of their journey across the Atlantic or to the Antipodes, or of extraordinary overland journeys such as the trek west across the USA.<sup>21</sup> Such records more frequently survive than accounts of mundane travel and, again, were likely to have been kept with the intention of future wider consumption by family members. Travel writing in general was (and still is) a popular

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<sup>18</sup> . L. Pearce, 'The urban imaginary: writing, migration, place', *Mobilities* 7 (2012) 1-11.

<sup>19</sup> . For example Humphries, *Childhood and child labour*; E. Griffin, *Liberty's dawn. A people's history of the industrial revolution* (New Haven, CT. 2013).

<sup>20</sup> . C. Erikson, *Invisible immigrants* (Miami, FL. 1972); E. Richards, 'Voices of British and Irish migrants in nineteenth-century Australia'. In C. Pooley and I. Whyte (eds.), *Migrants, emigrants and immigrants: a social history of migration* (London 1991) 19-41; E. Richards, 'How did poor people emigrate from the British Isles to Australia in the nineteenth century?' *The Journal of British Studies* 32 (1993) 250-279; C. Erikson, *Leaving England: Essays on British emigration in the nineteenth century* (Ithaca, NY. 1994).

<sup>21</sup> . A. Hassam, *Sailing to Australia: shipboard diaries by nineteenth-century British emigrants* (Manchester 1994); S. Schlissel, *Women's diaries of the westward journey* (New York, NY. 2011).

literary genre and was normally based on detailed personal experience.<sup>22</sup> Clearly such work was produced with an audience in mind, especially accounts of exotic overseas excursions; but more mundane holidays spent travelling at home were often recorded for personal use even when the writer did not normally keep a diary of everyday events. Most such accounts remain hidden in archives and family memorabilia. Although it is never possible to assess fully what was typical of any time, place or individual in the past, the aim of this paper is to focus on those aspects of everyday travel that are more rarely revealed.

### **The diaries**

This paper develops from a much longer-term interest, spanning almost 40 years, in using diaries and life histories to reveal aspects of everyday life that often remain hidden.<sup>23</sup> Usually access to unpublished personal diaries occurs by chance: a random discovery in an archive or through a personal contact. Although there are a number of published collections of diaries and other life writing,<sup>24</sup> many others remain in archives and private collections. The diaries

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<sup>22</sup> . For instance S. Mills, *Discourses of difference: an analysis of women's travel writing and colonialism* (London 1991); J. Duncan and D. Gregory (eds.), *Writes of passage: reading travel writing* (London 1999); C. Blanton, *Travel writing: the self and the world* (London 2013).

<sup>23</sup> . For instance C. Pooley and S. D'Cruze, 'Migration and urbanization in North West England, circa 1760-1830', *Social History* 19 (1994) 339-358; C. Pooley and J. Turnbull, 'Changing home and workplace in Victorian London: the life of Henry Jaques shirtmaker', *Urban History* 24 (1997) 148-178; C. Pooley, 'Getting to know the city: the construction of spatial knowledge in London in the 1930s', *Urban History* 31 (2004) 210-228; C. Pooley and S. Pooley, 'Constructing a suburban identity: the everyday life of a young late-Victorian female', *Journal of Historical Geography* 36 (2010) 402-410.

<sup>24</sup> . For example J. Burnett (ed.), *Useful Toil: Autobiographies of Working People from the 1820s to the 1920s* (London 1974); D. Vincent, *Bread, knowledge and freedom: a study of nineteenth-century working class autobiography* (London 1981); J. Burnett, D. Vincent and D. Mayall, *The autobiography of the working class: an annotated, critical bibliography* (Brighton 1984); W. Matthews (ed.) *British diaries: an annotated bibliography of British diaries written between 1442 and 1942* (Berkeley, CA. 1984); C. Cline, *Women's Diaries, Journals, and Letters: An Annotated Bibliography* (New York 1989). See also the bibliography in Humphries, *Childhood and child labour* 374-429.

used in this paper come from a new and developing archive produced through the Great Diary Project.<sup>25</sup> The aim of this project is to collect and make publicly available personal diaries from all time periods: so far in excess of 2000 diaries have been amassed by the project's instigator, Irving Finkel, and these are gradually being transferred to the library of the Bishopsgate Institute in London where they can be consulted.<sup>26</sup> Close reading of diaries to locate snippets of information on everyday travel is very time-consuming, and many diaries contain little of relevance. This paper focuses on evidence drawn from two diaries as it was thought better to explore a small number of diaries in some depth rather than try to cover a wider range. So far as we are aware neither of these diaries has been used previously in published research. Selection of the diaries used for this paper was based on a number of mainly pragmatic considerations. First, they both did contain a reasonable degree of detail about everyday movement; second, they offer contrasting perspectives on movement as the diarists are very different in their personal and social characteristics, and the diaries were written half a century apart; third, neither diarist achieved any public prominence and thus there is no indication that the diaries were written with a view to later publication; fourth, they were amongst the first of the (currently 152) diaries to be made publicly available; and, fifth, they were legible and in reasonably good condition. Further thoughts on their potential representativeness are offered in the concluding section.

The first diary is that of John Leeson who lived in London and kept a series of (surviving) diaries from July 1846 to May 1865 (just before he died).<sup>27</sup> The diaries are mostly neatly written with entries usually occurring every few days and reporting on events during that

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<sup>25</sup> . Great Diary Project: <http://www.thegreatdiaryproject.co.uk/> (2 March 2015).

<sup>26</sup> . Bishopsgate Institute: <http://www.bishopsgate.org.uk/> (2 March 2015).

<sup>27</sup> . Diaries of John Leeson 1846-1865, Bishopsgate Institute Library Archives (GDP/8).

period. John was born (in London) in 1803 so was 43 years of age when the diaries begin. At the outset he was unmarried and living with his mother in Davies Street, St Georges, Hanover Square, but in August 1850 (after his mother's death in 1847) he married his housekeeper and later had two children. In 1857 the family moved to Phillimore Place, Kensington.<sup>28</sup> Leeson is described in the census as a 'House Proprietor' and appeared to own and manage quite a large portfolio of property from which he collected the rents. He was clearly wealthy but kept quite a small household (in 1861 a housemaid, cook and nurse for the two small children)<sup>29</sup> and, from time to time, seemed to lack access to cash even though he had substantial capital. He travelled quite widely and often recorded some details of his own journeys and those of family members.

The second diaries to be explored were written by Ida Berry between November 1902 and January 1907.<sup>30</sup> She was 17 years old (about to turn 18) when the diaries began and lived with her widowed mother and two younger sisters in Northen Grove, West Didsbury, Manchester.<sup>31</sup> Her father (a yarn merchant) had died the previous year precipitating a move of home. Her father had clearly left sufficient money to support the family without either Ida or her mother having to work, but diary entries indicate that they were not well off. In the 1891 census (when her father was alive) the household had one general servant, but none in

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<sup>28</sup> . On nineteenth-century London see D. Olsen, *The Growth of Victorian London* (London 1976); R. Porter, *London: a social history* (Boston, MA. 1998).

<sup>29</sup> . Census of England and Wales, 1861.

<sup>30</sup> . Diaries of Ida May Berry 1902-1907, Bishopsgate Institute Library Archives (GDP/28)

<sup>31</sup> . On late-Victorian and Edwardian Manchester see B. Rodgers, 'Manchester: metropolitan planning by collaboration and consent; or civic hope frustrated', in: G. Gordon (ed.), *Regional cities in the U.K., 1890-1980* (London, 1986) 41-58; A. Kidd, *Manchester* (Keele 1993).

1911.<sup>32</sup> The diaries are quite closely written and note many everyday activities including travel around the Manchester area by a variety of means of transport, including by bike. However, the lack of errors, unchanging hand, and sometimes carefully composed prose suggest that they may have been copied up from other diaries or notebooks.

### **The experience of travel in the past**

Drawing on the diaries outlined above we now examine some of the key features of the ways in which these chroniclers travelled in two very different British cities in the mid-nineteenth century and the early-twentieth century. We particularly stress the ways in which everyday travel was embedded in most other aspects of daily life, variously facilitating or constraining actions; the wide range of transport modes that were used, and the reasons for choosing such modes; and the hazards and inconveniences that were faced. Diary extracts that illustrate the points made are given in boxes 1-6. It is not the aim of this paper to directly compare the two diaries as they are clearly written by two very different people and vary in style and content. In this sense direct comparison is probably not very useful. Rather, the diaries are presented as examples of life writing that can usefully be explored through close reading to inform our understanding of everyday mobility in the past. We seek to demonstrate the utility of the methodology and the nature of the information that can be revealed.

### ***The variety of travel***

Both of the diarists featured in this paper travelled widely and easily throughout the period covered by the diaries. The ability to move around at most times, and in both the day and night, was a taken-for-granted part of everyday life and facilitated the activities that they were either required or chose to undertake. Both diarists used a wide range of different

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<sup>32</sup> . Census of England and Wales, 1891 and 1911.

transport modes, choosing their form of transport depending on what was most convenient and appropriate at the time. In the diary of John Leeson short-distance everyday travel around London was mostly a taken-for-granted activity, and in his diary he often noted a destination (or person) he was going to but not the mode of travel. Routine trips included travel by Hansom cab or bus, with very local journeys on foot. Walking was something that he and his family enjoyed, especially for leisure in the London parks. When he did note his mode of transport around London it was often because it was out of the ordinary. Thus he commented on the few times he travelled in a 'Fly' (a light open carriage) and also in a Chaise (a more comfortable but light leisure carriage), usually with a friend who owned one.<sup>33</sup> There is no indication that Leeson himself ever kept a carriage or horse. Longer distance travel was mostly undertaken by train, including frequent visits to relatives in East Anglia, and holiday travel usually combined a number of different modes including steamer (to coastal resorts such as Margate), train and carriage. In common with many relatively affluent professional Londoners, Leeson regularly spent at least six weeks outside the capital in the summer months. For instance, in August 1855 the Leeson family travelled by steamer from London to Margate, then journeyed on to Ramsgate (by unspecified means) and returned to London by train. The following year he recorded that they left London by train to a village near Matlock, Derbyshire and then travelled on by coach to Buxton before returning home. Such multimode travel was unremarkable and in the diary holidays were mostly recorded briefly after the event. When Leeson referred to the travel of family and friends a similar variety of modes was recorded, with the form of transport chosen to suit the situation (Box 1).

Ida Berry and her family also used a wide range of different forms of transport to move around south Manchester. Everyday travel to shop, do errands or visit friends was commonly

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<sup>33</sup> . Glossary of carriages: <http://www.arnkarnk.plus.com/glossary.htm> (2 March 2015)

done by one or more mode including walking, tram, bus and train. Quite complex multi-mode journeys were common: for instance in May 1905, when she and her family were house-hunting prior to a residential move, they included travel on foot, by bus, cab and train in a single trip; similarly on Good Friday 1904 Ida (and friends) went out in the afternoon travelling by bus, tram, on foot and returning by train. What is clear is that using multiple forms of transport around south Manchester was both easy and normal for Ida and her associates. It is not clear to what extent such travel was planned carefully in advance or if, as seems more likely, it was taken for granted that transport would be available and would interconnect.

Most everyday transport was probably chosen for its convenience in relation to the journey undertaken, but for leisure and pleasure Ida clearly preferred to walk or cycle. She walked frequently, with her sister and with both male and female friends, around her immediate neighbourhood, both in the streets of Didsbury and in the parks and along the river Mersey. A walk with (mostly) male friends after chapel on a Sunday was usual, and recreational walks in local beauty spots often formed part of other outings. However, cycling was Ida's main passion and she and her sister Maud (just over one year her junior), were very regular cyclists throughout the spring and summer. Bikes were usually brought 'down' from winter storage in the house in March and were made roadworthy with the cycling season continuing until October if the weather was good. Most weeks Ida (usually with her sister and/or friends from chapel) went on several rides often of considerable distance. They had a regular eight mile (13 km) evening ride locally, but longer rides into Cheshire (including one all day cycle 'tour' to Congleton which covered some 50 miles (80 km) and included a walk up a local hill) were not uncommon. Round trips of about 20 miles (32 km) to Rostherne Mere in Cheshire (a local beauty spot) and similar locations were frequent, usually also incorporating

a walk. Only rarely were the bikes used for more mundane utility cycling and Ida recorded only one occasion when she and her sister cycled into central Manchester to go shopping.

The Berry family rarely took holidays and when they did it was usually with family in Leeds. On one occasion they had a few days in Llandudno and such longer distance travel was always by train. Longer distance day excursions by train, often with a group from chapel, occurred most years, including trips to Windermere, the Derbyshire Peak District and Morecambe. Although travel to and from a destination was by train, while there it was usual to also use other modes: for instance in Morecambe they travelled by tram and ‘char-a-banc’ and in Windermere on foot and by steamer (Box 2). Although transport technologies obviously changed from the 1850s to the 1900s, there are many similarities in the travel undertaken by the two diarists some 50 years apart in different locations and social positions. Both travelled frequently, made use of a variety of transport modes, and saw everyday movement as unremarkable. Longer distance travel was mostly by train with walking used for local utility travel. In London the somewhat wealthier Leeson made more use of cabs than did the Berrys in Manchester, but both walked (and in the case of Ida cycled) for recreation.<sup>34</sup>

### *The pleasures of travel*

For both diarists most journeys undertaken were not remarked upon beyond their destination and purpose, and there is no sense that they were either especially pleasurable or problematic. Unless something went badly wrong (see below) those trips that did generate additional

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<sup>34</sup> . For general overviews of urban transport in Victorian and Edwardian Britain see H. J. Dyos, and D. Aldcroft, *British transport: an economic survey from the seventeenth century to the twentieth* (Leicester 1969); M. Freeman and D. Aldcroft (eds.), *Transport in Victorian Britain* (Manchester 1991); J. Armstrong, ‘From Shillibeer to Buchanan: transport and the urban environment’, in: M. Daunton (ed.), *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain. Volume III 1840-1950* (Cambridge 2000) 229-260.

comments tended to be either by a form of transport not normally used or, most commonly, travel that was undertaken for pleasure, often with family and /or friends. John Leeson appeared to gain most pleasure from walking in the London parks, often with his family, or in the countryside on longer outings or when on holiday. Walking was viewed as good for the health of himself and his family, and he noted when his wife started walking out regularly again after illness or childbirth. Pleasure was also noted in the diary when unusual or new forms of transport were encountered. Although John Leeson travelled frequently by train and rarely remarked on the journey, when his elderly mother travelled alone by train (probably for the first time) in 1847 in order to visit relatives in Norwich, Leeson particularly commented on her enjoyment of the journey. John Leeson also noted favourably the further development of railway lines around London, citing the convenience that the improved connections across the Thames offered. John Leeson's most enthusiastic comments were reserved for those occasions when he travelled in a Chaise, always belonging to a friend, and especially when he was taken for rides through parts of London and the surrounding parks and country that he remembered from his childhood. The implication is that his father may have kept a carriage, and he had happy memories of travelling in it, but that he now only rarely travelled in such style. He also noted each time he travelled in a Fly, suggesting that it was seen as a luxury and only to be used on special occasions such as when he and his wife returned from a party in the early hours of the morning (Box 3). It can thus be suggested that particular pleasure was gained from travel whenever it was novel, if it brought back happy memories, if it was in an attractive location and if it was in the company of family and friends.

Much the same can be said about Ida Berry and her everyday movements. The forms of travel that she clearly enjoyed most were cycling (in the summer months) and walking (all year round). She often used quite lyrical language to describe her evening walks and cycle rides,

usually focusing on features such as the landscape, sunset and moonlight. Not surprisingly, both walks and rides were especially noted if she was in the company of friends, especially 'Norman' with whom she seemed to be developing quite a close relationship (though she never married). Outings, especially by bike, were also enlivened by refreshments with many mentions of stopping for tea and cakes (and often the purchase of picture postcards), while the combination of a cycle ride and country walk was also common. When cycling, Ida seemed especially to engage with the physical and sensual pleasures of movement, especially generated by light (sunset, moonlight or when cycling in the dark with lights on her bike), and by speed as when she 'coasts' down hills or on the occasions when she (and others with her) 'scorched' home. Here she is displaying her kinaesthetic engagement with cycling as discussed in a contemporary context by Justin Spinney.<sup>35</sup> As with John Leeson, Ida Berry also commented particularly when she engaged with new or novel forms of transport. Thus she made favourable comments when she travelled on the top deck of a tram, and noted the first time that she went in a motor bus. These occasions aside, everyday travel was reported in a matter of fact way (Box 4).

### *The inconveniences of travel*

As noted above most travel was unremarkable, some forms were especially enjoyed, and only a few proved problematic. When difficulties did arise they were usually easily resolved and did not seem to cause great distress. As today, everyday travel could be disrupted by the weather, by late-running trains, or by personal misfortune such as a fall or a rare encounter with theft. All these situations are recorded in the two diaries but none occurred frequently. John Leeson recorded only one definite instance of theft on the railway (and then not from

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<sup>35</sup> . J. Spinney, 'A place of sense: a kinaesthetic ethnography of cyclists on Mont Ventoux', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24 (2006) 709-732; J. Spinney, 'Cycling the city: movement, meaning and method', *Geography Compass* 3 (2009) 817-835.

him but from a friend), together with three occasions when his wife or sister ‘lost’ her purse during an outing. Here it is not clear if it was a case of theft or carelessness. In a small number of instances travel in winter was delayed by snow and ice, or by a broken-down train, but such occasions seemed to be rare and were not viewed as especially problematic. The most frustration was probably caused when snow and ice prevented Leeson and his family undertaking their regular walks. Accidents while travelling were also rare. On one occasion Leeson slipped when getting off an omnibus, and on another he noted a narrow escape when the horse ran away with him in a Fly. He also recorded one occasion when a friend was injured when their Chaise was hit by a cart from behind (Box 5). For the most part, however, everyday travel for John Leeson and his family in London in the mid-nineteenth century was undertaken without difficulty.<sup>36</sup>

Ida Berry similarly had few negative experiences when travelling, with most minor accidents and inconveniences unsurprisingly occurring while cycling. She recorded three punctures in her own bicycle tyres during the four years of the diary, and two more instances when punctures in a companion’s tyre interrupted a ride. She appeared unable to mend a puncture herself (due mainly to the tyre technology of the time) and always took her bike to a local shop to have a new inner tube fitted. Punctures apart, cycle maintenance appeared to be minimal, with annual visits to a shop in Didsbury to have the ‘free wheels’ oiled at the start of each cycling season. Ida recorded only one occasion when she came off her bike (without significant injury) and one instance when her sister was ‘thrown off’ her machine. These occasions apart, the main impediment to cycling and to walking was, predictably, the weather with quite frequent comments about wind and rain. Bad weather did not always prevent

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<sup>36</sup> . For an historical discussion of accidents and urban life see R. Cooter and B. Luckin (eds.), *Accidents in history: injuries, fatalities and social relations* (Amsterdam 1997); B. Luckin, ‘Accidents, disasters and cities’, *Urban History* 20 (1993) 177-190.

outings, though Ida did not cycle at all in winter, but snow or heavy rain could delay or shorten a walk, and there are several comments about being tired having cycled in wind. Negative comments about other forms of transport were rare. There is one occasion when she appeared to link travelling on the top of a tram to the onset of neuralgia, although she also experienced a similar attack the following day while cycling (without attributing it to the bike ride). Only rarely did Ida suggest that she went out reluctantly, the most notable being when her (widowed) mother appeared to be entertaining a male friend, presumably a suitor, and both Ida and Maud felt obliged to leave the house (box 6).

Diaries and other forms of life writing often leave unanswered questions, and there is one conundrum that occurs at the end of Ida's diary. In September 1906 Ida sold her bicycle (for £1.6s.0d) and her sister Maud had sold her machine some two weeks earlier. There is no explanation for this behaviour, and no regret expressed although, given the centrality of cycling to Ida's and Maud's lives previously, it seems inconceivable that the loss of the bikes would not have caused some inconvenience. Much of the sisters' social life had been centred on cycling. There are a number of possible explanations, although all are pure speculation. It is possible that the bikes were sold towards the end of the cycling season with a view to buying new ones in the spring. The entry occurred (and the diary ends) just before the family was about to move to a new home so maybe it was thought there was no room for bikes in the new house, though the move was only to an adjacent street with similar property. In addition, several weeks prior to the sale of the bikes both sisters had come off their bikes, so it is possible that their mother (or others with influence) felt that cycling was too dangerous, even though neither Maud nor Ida sustained any significant injury. It is also possible that at the age of 21 (almost 22) cycling was thought to be unbecoming for a young lady: although many in her social circle cycled, most of the cycling companions she noted (apart from her sister Maud) were male. A definitive answer is not possible, but it is clear that as the diary ends Ida

considered that she was moving into a fresh phase of her life, so maybe abandoning a form of transport that had previously been so central to her was part of forming a fresh identity as an adult in a new home.

### **Conclusions: lessons from the past**

The principal aims of this paper were to demonstrate the utility of diaries for examining everyday mobility, to describe and explain the movements recorded, and to consider the links between mobility and residential migration. Clearly, only limited generalisations can be drawn from the selective analysis of two diaries written in different places in England and half a century apart. However, the fact that there are considerable similarities in the experiences of travel expressed by these two reporters, despite their obvious differences, suggests that they may represent much more deeply embedded routines, processes and practices. How widely the experiences recorded here can be generalised must await much more extensive reading and analysis of a larger set of diaries,<sup>37</sup> but the narrower aims outlined above have been met. First, despite the statement by Felski at the start of this paper that everyday experiences are ‘elusive’,<sup>38</sup> this analysis has demonstrated that life writing can be used to reconstruct at least some aspects of the commonplace in past lives. Diaries will never record everything, and we never know what is left out or why, but the two quite factual and relatively unreflective diaries examined here do allow the reconstruction of at least some aspects of everyday travel. Second, we argue that not only are such practices revealed but also that they were important for the people involved. The so-called ‘mobilities turn’ in social science has stressed the centrality of all forms of movement for the functioning of

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<sup>37</sup> . This is currently part of our on-going research.

<sup>38</sup> . Felski, *The invention of everyday life*.

contemporary society, economy and culture.<sup>39</sup> Historical analysis of everyday travel demonstrates that not only was frequent and unproblematic travel also commonplace in the past, but also that it was as strongly embedded in wider social practices as is the case today. Rather than viewing everyday activities such as travel as unimportant, analysis of these two diaries demonstrates the ways in which (for these diarists at least) it was connected to most other aspects of everyday life. Although taken for granted most of the time, travel recorded in the diaries facilitated social, economic and cultural activities and relationships. Being unwilling or unable to travel could greatly restrict most other aspects of life.

Using any form of life writing to draw conclusions about emotions or impact is difficult.

Inferring effect is hard, drawing conclusions about affect is even more difficult, as we do not know how or if a diarist recorded any emotional attachments or feelings.<sup>40</sup> The vast majority of entries in the diaries that refer to mobility are short and provide little information beyond the fact that a journey took place. For instance in November 1846 John Leeson wrote simply 'I went to see Mary at her new house, Lilford Road'. The purpose and location of the journey is clear but there is no evidence that the trip had any deeper meaning or generated any particular feelings. As stated earlier, the diaries were in part chosen because they contained quite detailed information about everyday travel. Many other diaries consulted provide much less detail with information on travel remaining purely factual. From the evidence presented

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<sup>39</sup> . J. Urry, *Sociology beyond societies: mobilities for the twenty-first century* (London 2000); Urry, *Mobilities*; M. Sheller and J. Urry, 'The new mobilities paradigm', *Environment and Planning A* 38 (2006) 207-226; T. Cresswell, *On the move: mobility in the modern Western world* (London 2006); T. Cresswell and P. Merriman (eds.), *Geographies of mobilities: practices, spaces, subjects* (Farnham 2011); M. Grieco and J. Urry (eds.), *Mobilities: new perspectives on transport and society* (Farnham 2012).

<sup>40</sup> . On affect see for instance H. Lorimer, 'Cultural geography: non-representational conditions and concerns', *Progress in Human Geography* 32 (2008) 551-559; S. Pile, 'Emotions and affect in recent human geography', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35 (2010) 5-20.

here we suggest that while the everyday journeys recorded were central to the lived experiences of the diarists, and facilitated many everyday activities; only rarely did they generate stronger emotions or feelings. Those trips that were linked in the diaries with particular emotions tended to be unusual, rarely undertaken or exceptional in some way. Thus holidays, new forms of transport, experience of unusual speed, entertaining companions or accidents generated entries that suggested emotion and affect; but most everyday journeys were indeed mundane and appeared to have little meaning beyond the fact that they facilitated a particular activity. They were important but only rarely generated strong emotions as recorded in the diaries.

The extent to which everyday mobility influenced residential migration obviously cannot be generalised from just two diaries. As migration occurs much less often than mobility the number of occurrences recorded in diaries is mostly small, and clearly everyday mobility is only of relevance for short distance moves. However, both diarists studied either moved or considered moving within their local area during the span of the diary, and it is clear that their search behaviour took place in locations through which they regularly travelled on their everyday journeys. The search for a new home seemed sometimes to be based on information gleaned from previous journeys but on other occasions could generate quite specific trips. As in the case of Ida Berry, such travel could also incorporate other activities. In this sense, both everyday mobility and residential migration can be viewed as activities linked in a common web of mobility experiences. It is suggested that migration research would benefit from more often exploring the linkages between different aspects of mobility.

### **Box 1: John Leeson: the variety of travel**

Left London with Mrs Leeson and went by Eastern Union Railway to Norwich, very foggy. Went to Richard's house, Surrey Road - found all well. (Dec 23 1850)

I left London with Mrs Leeson, Lotty and nurse and went from London Bridge by steamer to Margate, took lodgings on the front – stayed there six weeks ... a pleasant rural country town with nice walks out of it ... went to Broadstairs – then to Ramsgate where we took lodgings at Miss Potts, Spencer Square, and were comfortable. ... Went to Canterbury, fine ride of 16 miles there, saw the cathedral, called at the inn I stayed at when last there ... fine view at Ramsgate of the coast, Pigwell Bay, Sandwich and Deal – stayed three weeks and came home by steamer in rough passage, and nurse sick. (August 5 to October 7 1852)

In afternoon Charlotte, I, Lotty and Fanny [Johnny?] walked in St James' Park – the park full of Holidays folk and children – tag rag and bob tail – all very happy. (April 15 Good Friday, 1854)

Charlotte, Lotty and I rode in a cab for the rents – called on Mrs Brown Camden Town who was not at home. (April 16 1854)

Left London with Mrs Leeson, Lotty, John and Nurse went by Railway to Rowsley and then by coach to Buxton – stayed there 3 weeks – to Matlock for 2 weeks – to Ilkeston for 2 weeks – to Nottingham for 2 weeks and then came home. Went to Manchester, Chatsworth, Haddon Hall, Derby Dale Abbey, Basford &c. (Aug 5 to Oct 8 1856)

Mrs Leeson, Johnny and Mr Beasley went in his Chaise to Mrs Crompton's – Wandsworth – to spend a day. (July 21 1859)

Source: All quotes in Boxes 1, 3 and 5 are from the diaries of John Leeson 1846-1865, Bishopsgate Institute Library Archives (GDP/8).

## **Box 2: Ida Berry: the variety of travel**

We went to Florrie's to tea ... We came home by train with Misses Saunders and Chattle they, went home in a cab as it was raining. (January 6 1903)

Aunty and I went to the Naval and Military Exhibition at St James' Hall, it was a very cold day, and we came back on the top of the tram. (January 12 1903)

Maud and I went to Chorlton by the 7.14 train to see Florrie. She had a bad cold. Millie Oliver was there. We went for a walk round Chorlton after and saw Church Road was taken, and then we came home on the 9.41 train, it was a pouring wet night. (February 3 1904)

We went to Chapel and then for a walk with Ruby and Norman and they brought us home. After dinner they called for us and we went on the bus to Cheadle and then on a tram to Stockport and then another to 'Woodley', and on the way we passed 'Vernon Park'. We climbed 700 feet and got to the top of 'Werneth Low'. It was lovely all the country round and we could see 'Kinder Scout' in the distance. We had tea at 'Compstall' and then walked into 'Marple' it was a lovely outing and we did enjoy it. We came home by train from Marple and they brought us home. (April 1 1904, Good Friday)

After dinner we all went by train to Chorlton, and then walked to Stretford and then we got on the top of the bus, and went to Urmston house hunting, it was a beautiful day and we had our tea at a shop. Coming home we had a cab from Stretford station to Chorlton station and caught the three minutes to seven train home. (May 10 1905)

Maud and I went on the top of the tram from Withington to All Saints ... we walked all the way home. (June 14 1906).

Source: All quotes in Boxes 2, 4 and 6 are from the Diaries of Ida May Berry 1902-1907, Bishopsgate Institute Library Archives (GDP/28).

### **Box 3: John Leeson: the pleasures of travel**

Mother came home by Railway from Norwich - I met her at the station at 2 of clock. Fred came with her. She looks well, pleased with her excursion there and likes Railway travelling. (August 21 1847)

Lotty began to go out again daily for a walk in morning and afternoon – had been in the house some days while the weather was cold and wet – looks much better for it. (March 12 1853)

I and Mrs Leeson dined with Mrs Salter and Mr Beasley Mr Carter and Mrs Salter at Hammersmith in afternoon. Mr B took me in his Chaise through Mortlake to Richmond on the Hill, through the Park a wedding and home over suspension bridge – I much enjoyed the ride, and it called up old times, riding with Father in his Chaise. (August 6 1859)

Mr Beasley took me in his Chaise for a ride – Fulham and Fields – Putney Bridge – Church – Bishop's Palace – Madam (?) Vestries' House – Chiswick – Thames and round by Villas and home. Had not seen it for 30 years when with Father. (August 3 1861)

I, Mrs L and Children had a ride in a Fly for 2 hrs – to Fulham, Putney Bridge, Bishop of London's Palace, Fulham Fields etc which we enjoyed very much – the first we have had. (April 12 1862)

Mrs L and children went to Mr Tunks, Long Ditton, for the day, by railway, they enjoyed it very much. (July 11, 1863)

I and Mrs Leeson to an evening party at Mr Fraser's – dancing – supper – music – almost 40 persons there – we left there in a Fly at 3 of clock. (March 14 1864)

#### **Box 4: Ida Berry: the pleasures of travel**

Mother and Baby and I walked through Northenden to Gibb Lane, it was a glorious day and the trees were lovely. In the evening Maud and I went for a ride to Cheadle, and later on we rode with lights. (May 19 1903)

We started at 9 o'clock for a Cycling Tour, and had a very good time, we passed through Gosworth and Havanna and proceeded to Congleton (50 miles) we passed the Bluebell Valley and all had lunch, under some trees on a grassy bank, near some rushing water. After lunch we left our machines at a farmhouse, and ascended to the top of Congleton Cloud, a very high mountain, the stretch of country to be seen for miles around was magnificent and the fresh breeze was most invigorating. We passed Reedes Mere and the water looked lovely in the sunshine. (June 1 1903, Bank Holiday Monday)

We went for a ride with Ruby and Norman to 'Castle Mill' and had tea there. We came home a long way round through 'Bramhall' and 'Wilmslow'. It was a glorious evening and as we came home down 'School Hill' the waning moon lighted our way. (April 30 1904)

After Chapel at night I went for a long walk with Harry and Norman, it was a glorious moonlight night, and we did have some fun. Harry made us roar, we met Ruby and Sam down 'Pine Road' and then we all went together down the back streets of Didsbury, and then we lost them, and Harry and Norman brought me home. (December 18 1904)

We went for our 8 mile ride for the first time this year. It was a glorious evening and we did enjoy it. The setting sun lighted all the newly opened leaves down Gibb Lane and the birds were singing and the air was lovely. We rested for a while down Stockport Rd. I viewed the familiar landscape and watched the rose-tinted clouds fly past. As we came home we met Harry, motoring, so he turned back and rode between us down Northern Grove, and we had a little chat at the gate. (March 27 1905)

Six of us went for a ride to 'Arley', it was grand. We had a beautiful tea and walked round the 'Meres', coming home we saw the most beautiful sunset we had ever seen, the sun looked like a jewel so bright, and the sky was blazing with red and gold. (May 27 1905)

Maud and I cycled to Alderley Edge after tea, it was a glorious ride we scorched home. (August 8 1906)

### Box 5: John Leeson: the inconveniences of travel

Mrs Leeson and the children began to walk out after being confined to the house [*by snow and ice*] for some days. ... The frost and snow leaving us – a gradual thaw for several days. Our water came in without bursting the pipes. (January 26 1851)

Mrs Harvey came home from Norwich, after nursing Mrs Leeson in her confinement - her pocket picked at the station and all her money stolen. (February 9 1850)

Charlotte lost £3 in an omnibus, going to her sister's at Walworth. Mrs Barnett out of employ, she in family way again. (February 8 1851)

Mrs Leeson went to London with Mrs Crompton and lost her purse (she thinks) in the Chrystal Palace Bazaar – in it about 10/- and sundry papers. (April 23 1859)

Mrs B Leeson left Mundesley with Teddy and gone by steamer to Kincardineshire on Forth – Scotland – nr Bridge of Allan – thinks of remaining there till Christmas. She lost her purse at Shoreditch Station with £5. (August 13 1859)

Mrs John Bunn of Norwich came to visit us – Mrs L and ... Bunn met her at the station – the train 3 hrs behind time – the engine out of order. (May 5 1859)

I slipped down in London – Euston Road – on leaving an Omnibus and sprained my left arm, was confined to the house a few days with the arm in a sling. (March 3 1860)

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 might have been thrown out and killed or much hurt – for which protection I bless his Holy Name. (April 26 1861)

## **Box 6: Berry: the inconveniences of travel**

Ruby and Norman came round for me to go for a cycle run with them to Ringway. All went well until we got out of Gibb Lane and then my back tyre burst and I had to wheel the bike home. (Saturday June 6 1903)

My neuralgia came on very bad again with going on the top of the tram. (September 16 1903)

We called at 10.15 for Ruby and we cycled to 'Rostherne' the wind was terrific and we had to walk a lot. (May 2 1904)

Maud and I walked as far as 'Owens College' and back as far as Fallowfield. We were tired. (April 28 1905)

Maud and I walked to Town to buy a sable paint brush, we were tired and came home on the tram from 'All Saints'. (May 31 1905)

That man came again, so afterwards we walked to Fallowfield and came back on the top of the tram. (July 3 1905)

Maud and I rode to 'Heaton Chapel' after tea and then to Wilmslow ... coming home I had a puncture and had to walk from Cheadle and we didn't get home till eleven. (July 4 1905)

It poured with rain in the morning but cleared up a little after dinner. Maud and I went to 'Alexandra Park' for a walk. In the evening it poured again and we had to stay in. (August 7 1905)

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. (July 24 1906)