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Mobilities and the English Village: Moving Beyond Fixity in Rural West Yorkshire

Bryonny Goodwin-Hawkins

Abstract

‘Rural idyll’ nostalgia situates the English village as timeless, bounded and static. It is contrasted to urban modernity and dynamism. The urban moves; the rural is held still. This has been echoed by limited scholarly engagement with rural mobilities. Against spatio-temporal boundedness, this article emphasises the centrality of rural mobilities and conceptualises movement as occurring in, of and through the village. Drawing upon ethnographic research undertaken during 2011–2012 in ‘Lyng Valley’, a post-industrial rural district in West Yorkshire, Northern England, I illustrate the village as on the move in both the past and the present. Arguing for rural mobility as continual and intrinsic, I challenge the concatenation of mobility with urbanity.

The English village sits at the heart of the rural idyll: ‘nestling in folded downland countryside, characterised by thatched roofed cottages, a village pond, cricket pitch and a nearby crystal-clear trout stream’ (Hetherington 2000, p. 20). It is gentle, stable and timeless – a foil to city bustle (Williams 1973). It is a persistent fiction (Newby 1987).

Through the rural idyll, the English village and its villagers are readily imagined as past in time and fixed in space. These ideas can influence scholarship, too, as Nadel-Klein (1995) observes in the interests and findings of rural community studies. More recently, I suspect that fictions of rural fixity are a factor in the general neglect of rural places in the social science ‘mobilities turn’ of the past decade (Bell and Osti 2010). This neglect portrays mobility as entirely a modern, urban phenomenon: the rural is left fixed. Therefore, as Bell and Osti (2010, p. 201) state, ‘we must begin by contending that the concept of rural mobilities is not a contradiction in terms’.

Bell and Osti’s call (see also Milbourne 2007) forms the beginning for this article. My response is a particular one. I believe that explorations of rural mobilities have much to contribute to ongoing debates in rural studies, particularly those around definitions (e.g., Hoggart 1990; Halfacree 1993; Murdoch and Pratt 1993; Bell 2007; Bell *et al*. 2010) and representations of the rural (e.g., Matless 1994; Halfacree 1995; Jones 1995; Phillips *et al*. 2001; Smith and Phillips 2001; Walker 2002; Short 2006; Horton 2008). In learning how the rural moves, scholars might speak the more to what the rural is and what it is imagined to be. But, I do not believe that this potential can be adequately met by solely investigating conspicuous forms of ‘hypermobility’ (Vannini 2009; Cresswell 2010) – typically, in a rural context, migration (e.g., Kasimis *et al*. 2010; Oliva 2010; Halfacree and Rivera 2012; Hedberg and do Carmo 2012). To fully explore rural mobilities, rural places must be read as more than points moved to or from (Malkki 1992; Doel 1999).

I argue that mobilities are neither definitionally urban nor uniquely modern but are, instead, continual through time and intrinsic to place. Rural mobilities, therefore, are manifold. My approach is informed by both fluid rethinking of the nature of place (e.g., Massey 1993a; Bender 2001; Ingold 2011) and the broad possibilities of the mobilities research agenda (Hannam *et al*. 2006). I outline these literatures in the first section. I then use them to re-read the English village as a mobile place. Doing so, I step from the imaginary idyll to the real village of Snay Top in Lyng Valley , a post-industrial rural district in West Yorkshire, Northern England, where I undertook ethnographic research in 2011–2012.

Bell and Osti (2010) ask how the diverse forms of rural mobilities might be conceptualised; Milbourne (2007, p. 385), considering population change, sees 'movements into, out of, within and through rural places'. In this article, I frame movement through, of and in the village. I make an ethnographic exploration of each. I take these three frames to illustrate the interconnections between mobility and place, people and pasts and to provoke further possibilities for uncovering rural mobilities.

There is a tension in what 'rural' means between the rural as a kind of place and the rural as particular representations of place (Halfacree 1993). Within rural studies of the 'cultural turn' (Phillips 1998; Woods 2009) this tension has opened debate on how the rural is thought about and how it might be thought differently. My contribution falls here.

From rural fixity to moving places, migration and mobilities

'A fallacious conception of rural life', writes Newby (1987, p. 3), 'has become one of the major protecting illusions of our time'. The origins of the contemporary imagining of English rurality can be traced some 500 years to the sensibilities and ambitions of the Tudor elite (Williams 1973; Bunce 1994). From this, a (constructed) countryside aesthetic became

enshrined in the national imaginary as authentic and natural (Newby 1987; Bunce 1994; Mischi 2009). In the wake of the industrial revolution, the rural idyll – imagined as a shared past – became a foil to the miseries of urban life (Williams 1973). This idyllic imagining has remained remarkably persistent (Newby 1979; Bennett 1993; Bunce 1994, 2003; Jones 1995; McEachern 2000; Walker 2002; Wallwork and Dixon 2004; Short 2006; Horton 2008).

In rural:urban discourse (Williams 1973; see Pahl 1966), the village stays fixed while the urban is mobile. (After all, if it is to remain idyllic, the village cannot change). English villages have accrued perceptions of enduring stability, custom, kinship and parochial community – and as a result they have been cast as anachronisms (Nadel-Klein 1995). Rural fixity was often evoked by ethnographers of the English village in mid-century community studies (Nadel-Klein 1995). Later, in *Belonging*, a significant contribution to British ethnography, editor Anthony Cohen (1982) declared rurality to be precisely the locus of culture. Cohen's vision of rural authenticity was of bounded (e.g., Cohen 1985, 1987) places populated by 'locals' who 'belong'. This reflects a 'sedentarist' (Malkki 1992; Cresswell 2006) perspective in which places are understood 'as tightly bounded and fixed ... as containers' (Kabachnik 2012, p. 213).

Sedentarist understandings are countered by what Massey (1993a) terms a 'non- parochial' view of place. In this reading, places are interdependent and dynamic. Place, Yi-Fu Tuan (2003) observes, is pause; places are sites of inhabitance where one may linger but never entirely stop. Pausing places splay across what Bender (2001, p. 76) and Ingold (2011, p. 160) identify as 'a world of movement'. In both movement and pause, places are opened to human experience in ways that are 'polysemic, contextual, processual and biographical' (Bender 2001, p. 79). This approach recognises that people live not simply on the world, corralled neatly into spatial limits, but in it, dynamically interacting with the world and with

one another (Massey 2005; Ingold 2011). Amplifying this, Ingold (2011) has reworked a sedentarist Heideggerian 'dwelling' perspective (e.g., Ingold 1993) into a dynamic concept of 'wayfaring'. Way- faring describes an experiential being in the world in which, proceeding along a path, every inhabitant lays a trail. Where inhabitants meet, trails are entwined, as the life of each becomes bound up with the other. Every entwining is a knot, and the more that lifelines are entwined, the greater the density of the knot (Ingold 2011, p. 148). Wayfaring places twine people and histories together. They are not inert, but storied, lived in, changed and changing.

In rural studies, a similar approach has been recently articulated as 'relational rurals' (Heley and Jones 2012). It is an approach developing from a lineage of provocations (e.g., Hoggart 1990; Murdoch and Pratt 1993) to engage with questions of what the rural is (e.g., Halfacree 1993; Jones 1995; Bell 2007) and who is in it (e.g., Philo 1992). These questions have also influenced investigations into contemporary trends of globalisation (e.g., Woods 2007) and, relatedly, migration (e.g., Smith 2002; Milbourne 2007; Phillips 2010; Halfacree 2012; Woods 2012) in a rural context. Research on these aspects – including demographic change and gentrification – has notably shown rural realities to be far from fixed (Milbourne 2007; Bell and Osti 2010). Indeed, migration research has led explorations of rural mobilities.

The social science 'mobilities paradigm' calls attention to bodily, material, imaginative, communicative and virtual mobilities and the interconnections between them (Urry 2007). Explicitly rejecting sedentarist perspectives (Hannam *et al*. 2006), mobilities relates closely to the non-parochial readings of place I discussed above. Mobilities scholarship, Cresswell (2010, p. 551) suggests, has broad application 'because of its centrality to what it is to be in the world'.

But although mobilities research claims a concern with both large-scale movement and the small-scale flux of everyday life (Hannam *et al*. 2006), focus has, in practice, typically fallen on the former (Cresswell 2010). In an emphasis upon 'hypermobilities' (Vannini 2009; Cresswell 2010) studies of transnationalism, travel and migration have blossomed. Further, this research has tended to conflate mobility and modernity (Cresswell 2010; Salazar and Smart 2011; see also critiques of time-space compression, e.g., Massey 1993b; May and Thrift, 2001). As a result everyday mobilities and movement and change over time have often been neglected within mobilities research (but notable exceptions include Adey 2006; Vannini 2009, 2012).

This pattern has been largely repeated in studies of rural mobilities, which have been dominated by migration (e.g., Blekesaune *et al*. 2010; Kasimis *et al*. 2010; Oliva 2010; Phillips 2010; Gkartzios and Scott 2012; Halfacree 2012; Halfacree and Rivera 2012; Hedberg and do Carmo 2012). Migration is an important area of rural research yet its treatment as the *sine qua non* of rural mobilities is concerning. To counter rural fixity with migration risks portraying rural residents as fixed unless they have moved to or from urban places. Rather than illustrating rural mobilities, this may inadvertently reinforce representations of mobility as quintessentially urban.

Bell and Osti (2010, p. 199) assert that 'the rural is at least as mobile as the urban, if not more so'. The challenge to rural studies, and to mobilities scholarship generally, is to show how this is true. By taking an interest in small-scale mobilities and by seeing movement as innate to place it becomes possible, I suggest, to engage more holistically with rural mobilities. To this end, I propose 'moving the village' through three interconnected framings. Mobility, clearly, occurs 'through' places, as pauses on wayfaring routes (and see Milbourne 2007, on rural places as meeting places). Mobility may also be 'of' places. No place stands perfectly

still: its structures are made, modified and destroyed (Adey 2006). To encounter a place for the first time is to view it at a mere moment in long-term movement. Finally, mobility occurs 'in' places as people go about their daily lives, in work and in leisure (Seamon 1980; Edensor 2010; Ingold 2011). These three forms – movement in, of and through the village – frame my analysis of mobilities as continual and intrinsic.

Introducing Snay Top

Lyng Valley (population 7,000) is a small sub-district comprising the valley town of Dalebrig (population 4,000) and five upland civil parishes. It is located in Northern England's rugged South Pennine ranges, an area best known for Emily Brontë's (2000 [1847]) *Wuthering Heights*. The district is agriculturally marginal due to scarce arable land and poor soils.

Snay Top is a typical upland village of the district. Located at around 1,000 feet altitude, the village and vicinage (Snay Top civil parish) has a population of some 700 and a land area largely consisting of uninhabitable moorland. I was resident as an embedded researcher in Snay Top from April–September 2011 and March–September 2012 . I leased a cottage in a farmstead and became occupied in 'learn-[ing] how to live appropriately and successfully' (Harvey 2011) in the village. I engaged in participant-observation at formal events, organised groups, religious ser- vices and other social occasions. I carried out semi-structured and unstructured interviews in residents' homes and a small number of outdoor 'walking interviews' (Evans and Jones 2011). My activities and developing social connections led me throughout the district.

Hastrup has argued for ethnographic research 'distinguished by taking seriously both the movements of the social agents, and the paths they carve out, physically and socially, through their wayfinding' (Hastrup 2005, p. 145). It is with this approach in mind that I draw upon

my ethnographic data to illustrate Snay Top as a mobile place (see also Salazar and Smart 2011).

Movement through the village: the road

I am standing on the road near my farmstead, at an elevated point where much of Snay Top's scattered settlement is visible ahead. I have been walking with local historian Erik and he has chosen this point to pause and draw my attention to the view. He stretches out his arm so that, in a trick of perspective, it follows the wavering line of the main road though the village. His pointing fingers reach beyond Snay Top, over the valley fold and to the next hillside, some miles distant. 'Do you see?' He asks me.

Roads are perhaps the most visible lines of wayfaring. They bear stories (Harvey 2005) and shape them, too (Bakhtin 1981). This narrative capacity is central to the recent blossoming of ethnographic approaches to roads (Dalakoglou 2010). This is an analysis dominated by motorways (Dalakoglou 2010) which are read as loci of modernity and statecraft (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2012). Roads are thus presented as specifically new formations, synonymous with tarmac. Yet roads are, most simply, routes of movement. Their stories wind through long and varied histories.

It was history, rather than scenery, that Erik was so keen to show me as we paused during our walk in Snay Top. He wanted me to understand the connection between the road we stood on and the road visible across the valley, leading through the village of Heighstall. With his outstretched arm, Erik marked a line between points, showing me how two rural roads on two different hillsides cohere into a single route: an upland trans-Pennine trade route of at least[3] medieval origin.

Historically, settlement in Lyng Valley favoured the uplands, which offer light and expanse in contrast to the dark, cramped valleys. But because of the challenges of agricultural self-sufficiency in the region, medieval-era residents evolved a ‘dual economy’ (Murtagh 1982; Jennings 1983) of small-scale agriculture and hand-loom weaving. Cloth provided access to the exchange economy. The upland trade route linked Snay Top and other local villages with the regional economies of Yorkshire and Lancashire, and then further afield. By the sixteenth century Lyng Valley cloth was being traded on continental markets. Along the route and through Snay Top came a traffic of traders and travellers (and even covert Catholic priests). Wool, foodstuffs and other goods came in; woven cloth went out. News, narrative and novelty undoubtedly moved through, too.

The trade route and the weaving economy wound together, each enabling the other. This coexistence, recalled by the road, shows movement through Snay Top as fundamental. As a weaving village astride a trade route, mobility was intrinsic to Snay Top’s existence.

Snay Top is no longer a weaving village. Economic changes following the industrial revolution (which I will discuss in the following section) mean that most contemporary trans-Pennine traffic follows the valley road through Dalebrig rather than passing through the uplands. Yet this does not diminish the importance of movement through Snay Top. Movement through continues to be socially valued, as is evident in the case of the Lyng Valley bus service.

The ‘little buses’ – sturdy vehicles with a capacity of 20 passengers – are a familiar presence on the upland roads. Plying the former trade route, they link the villages to each other and to Dalebrig, where they connect with the railway and the ‘big buses’ to larger towns and cities. The little buses belong to a big network of mobilities.

With travel free to those over 60, the buses are particularly valued by older residents, who use them to facilitate shopping, appointments, social visiting and leisure outings. On Thursdays, for example, when a Dalebrig carpark becomes a bustling outdoor food market, the buses fill with shoppers. Heighstall village's Craft Circle schedule their weekly meetings to coincide with the bus schedule, thus recruiting a lively membership from throughout the district.

The significance of the bus service to mobility and sociality became particularly clear in early 2012 when a new contractor failed to adequately operate the service. Throughout West Yorkshire, the bus system consists of dozens of operators running services under contract to a public transport executive. In 2011 a new contractor had been appointed to run the little buses. The contractor's inadequacies quickly became evident: the vehicles slipped into disrepair, drivers skipped their shifts, timetables floundered into delays and cancellations. The familiar sight of the little buses along the roads was replaced by grim-looking potential passengers, hunkering into their raincoats as they stood waiting.

While those without access to private cars were the worst affected, both regular and occasional bus users united in indignation. Erik, who faced Snay Top's main bus stop from his study window, started a log of missed or delayed services. Although he owned a car, Erik appreciated the convenience of the buses for when he wanted to 'pop into town without having to worry about parking' or enjoy a few drinks in neighbouring villages. He also emphasised the importance of bus trans- port for other local residents and saw his log as a form of community advocacy. After local agitation culminated in a public meeting at Dalebrig Town Hall (at which Erik's data was presented), the bus contractor was replaced and the service rapidly improved.

As I have shown in this section, the road through Snay Top tells a story of movement 'through' the village. The road is a historic locus of mobility, intrinsically twined to the village's weaving trade past. It remains a significant present-day route, connecting people with each other and with other places. The road has carried people, goods and ideas through centuries of change. I turn to change as a form of movement in the following section.

Movement of the village: The Gate

In The Gate, Snay Top's pub, the fire crackles on a chilly Saturday evening. A mixed crowd of men and women perch on the stools at the bar; conversation burbles through bursts of laughter. Landlord Aled is busy: pulling pints, setting tables for the diners who straggle in and running orders to the kitchen, stoking up the fire, entertaining the drinkers with jokes and tall tales. The pub is warm and homely. The patrons settle in.

Representations of the village as a check-list of ingredients (pub, church, post office and so on) can almost imply that it has somehow emerged ready-made. Clearly this pre-fabrication rarely occurs. But it remains important to underscore the physical processes – both past and ongoing – that have constituted and re-constituted the village as a built environment. The mobilities of physical change (Adey 2006) are what I refer to as movement 'of' the village.

The Gate, cosily inviting, might seem an archetype of stability at the heart of the village. Framed pictures evoking place and past intentionally place the pub within Snay Top: enlarged photographs near the bar show parts of the village in the late nineteenth century, a local artist's watercolours hang above the doors and fireplaces and a contemporary panoramic photograph of the village in the snow runs along the dining room wall. Perhaps these pictures might be seen as simply parochial, reminding patrons that they are not in any village pub but Snay Top's pub. However, The Gate and its pictures tell a mobile tale.

The Gate has been a pub for as long as anyone in the village can recall, but it was originally a farmstead. Neither historian Erik nor landlord Aled can determine when The Gate began serving beer. It is likely that this trade grew from its position tight alongside the main road: The Gate, now as then, occupies a prime spot for attracting passing traffic. That such a typifying structure as the village pub was not purpose-built but flexed into a role over time (and in association with a mobile route) illustrates the historical processes that have moved the village.

The grainy, black and white photographs that have been enlarged to hang upon The Gate's walls capture Snay Top in the late nineteenth century. Doubtless these partly evince what Edwards (1998) terms a 'need for "a bit of history" ', but even as such they reflect a history of mobility and change. The photographs are jarring images compared to the contemporary village: they show Snay Top at the peak of industrial- ism, its houses and buildings dwarfed by two large cotton mills.

As an existing weaving district with harnessable rivers, Lyng Valley was an appealing site for the industrial revolution's early entrepreneurs. The textile industry proliferated throughout the nineteenth century and Lyng Valley was transformed. Due to its proximity to water power, Dalebrig swelled from a hamlet at a trade route river ford into an industrial town. This inverted the historic settlement pattern, relocating population and trade traffic (via the new railway line) from the uplands to the valley. Eventually the mills were built in Snay Top: the village had moved from weaving to industrialism. The mills operated for over a century, marking the village in both structure and memory.

The mills intensified change in the built environment. They were accompanied by administration blocks and maintenance sheds while terrace blocks sprouted to house

incoming employees. In turn, Snay Top School opened and a Methodist chapel was built. The village moved in the reconfiguration of spaces and socialities.

The village continues to move. Post-industry, one mill burnt down; the other was mothballed and has more recently been converted for small businesses. In the mid- 1990s a developer proposed building some 20 new houses on a cow field. Friction over development itself produces moving experiences as ideas about the shape of the village grow, change or settle. In the 1990s contention, earlier developments – post- war public housing, a cluster of 1960s bungalows, the mill workers' terraces – were seen to have settled into the village fabric. Such ongoing movement has created the scene captured in the panorama on The Gate's wall. This scene is not the village as it always has been and will remain, but a mobile place paused merely in the moment of a camera's shutter.

While The Gate and its photographs tell a moving tale of spatial and economic changes, the pub was caught up in another movement of the village in 2012. Snay Top was struck by flash flooding when torrential rain hit the already sodden moor- land above. Flowing water surged through The Gate's doors; footage of a bewildered Aled surveying the damage was transmitted on television news. As residents explored the post-flood landscape, tales were swapped and images circulated on social media.

The village had quite literally moved. A gravel lane running uphill from the main road was washed into a pile of rubble in The Gate's carpark. Channels were carved into the road where the drains had been overwhelmed. Vegetation was destroyed and rivulets cut through fields. Further, the flood moved people and possessions. Water- logged carpets and damaged furniture were stacked on the roadside awaiting rubbish collection. Spare rooms were sought for those whose homes had been badly flooded so that where residents lived and who lived

with them became a matter of flux. In The Gate, the pictures came down while the fittings were stripped and the walls re-plastered.

Snay Top as a contemporary village has been produced by moving processes: economic change, migration, development and even natural disaster. Traces of these phases in the movement of the village are often still visible from the mullioned windows of former weaving cottages, to the bricked up arch of the The Gate's old barn door, to the remaining mill's monumental smokestack. The panoramic photograph in The Gate's dining room shows a village captured prettily in the snow. It is a village which is, has been and will remain on the move.

Movement in the village: the paths

Floss points down to the paved path at our feet, frowning at the encroachment of long grass from the surrounding field. 'We have to keep these paths open', she says with conviction. With her booted feet she stomps heavily upon the grass, encouraging me to do the same. Stomp, stomp, stomp we go as we make our way across the field. 'Now you know what to do next time you come this way', she declares, as we climb the stile at the path's end.

Lyng Valley is criss-crossed by a network of hundreds of paths and lanes, most only accessible to foot and horse traffic. Some are mapped and signposted; others are informal and indeterminate. The paths were forged years or centuries ago for many purposes, not all of which remain apparent. A few path names, such as Heighstall's 'coffin track' from village to cemetery, indicate defunct purposes. Other paths show original or evolved uses in their form: paved tracks, for example, are found around mill sites, having served as routes to and from work. Other paths appear mysterious: overgrown steps cut into steep hillsides or thin tracks darting off from more heavily trodden routes. Some paths lace together cunning shortcuts,

others promise leisurely rambles; many residents use the paths for both purposes. My walking interviews demonstrated that individuals use a fabric of paths, learning how they stitch together over time, through experience, with guidance from others and sometimes using maps.

Whilst the road, discussed above, forms an obvious locus of movement 'through' Snay Top, paths are a more subtle means of traversal. I read them in this section as a motif of movement 'in' the village. (It is worth noting that the paths also facilitate movement 'through', as the path network can easily be used in inter-village, or village to town, travel. Indeed, that movement does not neatly deconstruct into the three categories used here highlights the complexity and flexibility of rural mobilities). To do so, I consider the use of the paths by two of my informants: Floss and Ruby, Snay Top residents in their seventies and thirties, respectively.

When Floss celebrated her birthday in 2012, she was delighted to receive, from her daughter, a new pair of walking boots. Although she was no longer as physically able as she had been in younger days, Floss was a keen walker and tried to 'do a loop' of farmland and moorland paths around Snay Top at least weekly. She had been born in the village and had used the paths since childhood. Floss knew the paths intimately and continued to experience them as both practical and pleasurable.

One of Floss's favourite uses of the paths was for wild food foraging. She knew a network of paths where bilberries and brambles could be seasonally found. As the season drew near, Floss walked the paths with anticipation and paid keen attention to the slowly ripening fruit. When the time for picking arrived, her daughter, who lived in Southern England where bilberries do not grow, would travel up for a weekend and together they would fill baskets, returning home to turn their bounty into pies and jams.

Floss's long-term use of the paths had made them memory-filled. She organised an annual mid-summer group walk for the Snay Top Women's Institute. I attended this event in 2011 and it was apparent how the paths wove through memory and story for Floss and the other women who walked them. Paths that we used and places that we passed via them prompted the women to offer each other stories and observations about their lives, their memories and longer village histories. Here was a path that a woman had regularly walked from her childhood home to the village school; there a view of a house, evoking memories of its inhabitants. The women interacted with each other's stories, adding to them and reworking them, moving from one story into another in a way akin to the twists into other linked paths.

Recognising the importance of the paths to herself and to others, Floss was thus protective of them. She stomped upon encroaching grass (and taught me to) in order to keep paths accessible. She was also one of several volunteers who monitored paths4 and notified the district council of obstructions to public rights of way .

Like Floss, Ruby had a well-developed knowledge of Snay Top's path network, although hers was of more recent origin as she had moved to the village in 2007. Ruby was a keen runner and a member of the Dalebrig and District Fell Running Club; she had learnt the paths through running them. Fell running is a popular sport in the Pennines and other upland areas of Britain. Fell runners traverse off- road tracks and moorland, using topography to test the body. I achieved a fitness level through which to become a participant-observer in the sport in 2012 and met Ruby after participating in my first race: a five mile circuit on the moorland above Snay Top. As an experienced runner, she encouraged me as a beginner and we scheduled a run together as both a time for me to interview her (in the most ambitious of my walking interviews) and as an opportunity for her to mentor me in running technique.

We rendezvoused outside The Gate on a clear weekday morning and I asked Ruby, as I did with all my walking interviewees, to choose our route. She plotted an hour-long run up to the moor, where we would loop around a set of paths before descending back to the village. Ruby chose the particular paths that we ran on in the moments when we arrived at forks and path junctions, shouting out to me as she took the lead. As we ran, Ruby explained that her knowledge of the paths had been heightened by her interest in navigation. She travelled throughout Britain to compete in fell races and particularly enjoyed those in which, rather than running a fixed route, competitors had to navigate the terrain themselves. She explained that Snay Top was a very good area to hone her navigational skills because many paths were either not included or inaccurately rendered on the Ordnance Survey map. Her navigational skills found a further use in her voluntary work with the local mountain rescue team.

The paths are in almost constant use as a means of movement in Snay Top and environs. They are, as the examples of Floss and Ruby show, a significant mobile network, knotting routes, stories, memories and experiences into place.

Discussion and conclusion

To leave movement out of portrayals of the village is to linger upon a placid idyll of no more substance than the imagination. In this article, I have developed calls to examine rural mobilities (Milbourne 2007; Bell and Osti 2010) by considering movement as an explicit counter to representations of the English village as a static idyll. Snay Top is an example reflecting the centrality and continuity of rural mobilities and the long term flux and flow of rural change. In this concluding discussion I reprise my argument to consider the potential of mobilities research to amplify rural studies perspectives.

Representations have long been on the rural studies agenda (e.g., Newby 1979, 1987; Bell 1992; Halfacree 1995; Jones 1995). Halfacree (1993) draws attention to the role of representation, alongside locality, in defining what the rural is. Many enduring rural portrayals depict rootedness, community and stability. The persistence of such representations, I have suggested following Bell and Osti's (2010) observation, has often caused rural mobilities to be neglected. Too often, the rural is made to stay still. Meanwhile, mobilities research has largely become an urban paradigm.

Research within the mobilities paradigm has been dominated by modern 'hypermobilities' (Vannini 2009; Cresswell 2010). I have sought to shift away from this focus, emphasising mobilities as continual through time and intrinsic to place. In this, my approach links a mobilities perspective with recent relational approaches to place. Just as rural mobilities remains a large gap in the literature, there is much yet to explore in the 'wayfaring' (Ingold 2011) routes and rhythms of ordinary life. There is, I have argued, so much more to mobilities than the migratory currents of to and from.

The mobilities paradigm is not foundationally intended to be spatially biased (Hannam *et al*. 2006). There is ample room within it to explore rural mobilities from a variety of angles. Doing so involves a switch from representations to the actualities of rural lives and localities. This, in turn, requires both care and complexity.

Studying rural mobilities requires care because representations of rural fixity linger, trap-like. That is, there are risks of unintentionally re-ascribing rural stillness. Such risks exist in the conflation of mobility with migration or counter-urbanisation: the rural becomes a still spot moved to (Milbourne 2007). Similarly, although mobilities are always complemented by 'moorings' (Hannam *et al*. 2006) there are risks in calls to examine rural 'stabilisation' (Bell *et al*. 2010). My point is not that rural studies scholars should abandon such inquiries – they

are important and fruitful – but that there remains a gap for demonstrating that rural places are intrinsically never still. This is a matter of complexity.

'Let's do away with rural,' Hoggart (1990) proposes, arguing that definitions of the rural allow rural places to be lumped together without differentiation. Hoggart's provocation, together with later responses (e.g., Halfacree 1993; Bell 2007), remains an important reminder that rural places are complex and individual. What I have outlined in this article is an approach to rural mobilities that calls attention to the specificities of place. By framing movement through, of and in the village I have been able to demonstrate that Snay Top is both a mobile place and a particular place. Snay Top has features in common with many other English villages, from the changes wrought by industry to contentions over development and public transport provision. These join particularities: the physicality of fell running, local weaving and textile history, the effects of a flash flood. Other rural places have other mobile tales to tell.

Clearly, my approach to mobilities is a qualitative one (see Smith 2002; Milbourne 2007; Kasimis *et al*. 2010). Milbourne's (2007) concern that qualitative research in rural studies is often poorly interpreted as generalisation is, I think, apt in the light of Hoggart's (1990) critique. My three mobile framings – through, of and in – are broadly applicable to other places and other contexts. But, from my ethnographer's perspective, they function best as prompts to place-specific analysis. It is in comprehending how different rural places are differently mobile that, I believe, we can understand both mobilities and the rural more fully.

Movements through, of and in are not discrete categories, but flexible and inter- connecting. Together, they constitute a rural reality that, far from being fixed, bristles with movement.

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Notes

[1] I follow Rapport's (1993) ethical practice for the ethnography of Britain by anonymising both people and places. 'Lyng Valley', 'Snay Top', 'Dalebrig' and 'Heighstall' are all pseudonyms. Identifying information has been removed or disguised, except where it has a direct impact upon the issues discussed. All informants named in this article are referred to by pseudonyms. Identifying information has been changed, except where directly relevant and some compositing has been used to facilitate clarity.

[2] The two phases of fieldwork were not a deliberate element of the research design but were pragmatically necessary as the UK does not offer a research visa to doctoral-level scholars.

[3] Bronze Age artefacts found in the area suggest considerably earlier trade networks, although it is difficult to know which routes were used.

[4] The UK has 'right to roam' legislation which covers public paths upon private land.

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