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Sara Dominici

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# Photography and Early Motor Touring in Britain

Sara Dominici 

This article explores the arrival of the motorcar in Britain as it polarised photographers' opinions like no other means of transport before. The article asks, more specifically, why those photographers who came from the experience of cycling believed that the new transport technology hindered the practices of observation that they treasured and, relatedly, how the use that the motorists made of the camera ushered in a new way of being modern. It does so by reconstructing the impact that the new material and social experiences triggered by motoring, together with the visual culture that accompanied its popularisation, had in shaping the automobile's relationship with photography. The article argues that photographers' conflicted attitudes towards the role that the motorcar played in their leisure lives is reflected in a tension between established and emerging machine-driven visual epistemologies at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Email for correspondence:  
[s.dominici@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:s.dominici@westminster.ac.uk)

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'What photographer', asked the editor of the weekly *Amateur Photographer* in 1895:

perchance insufficiently limber of limb to propel a cycle of adequate carrying power, has not prayed for some simple vehicle of the motor type whereon he could load the encumbrance of a weighty camera kit, and, adding his own avoirdupois, trundle merrily to some chosen scene of intended operations, arriving there unfatigued and fit for work?<sup>1</sup>

Writing on the eve of the first large-scale motor show in Britain,<sup>2</sup> when fewer than ten automobiles – a term used interchangeably with motorcar – are estimated to have been on British roads,<sup>3</sup> the journal projected onto the early prototypes of motor-propelled vehicles the hopes and desires of an increasingly mobile and leisure-oriented photographic community. While celluloid-based film had been on the market for several years, glass plates were still preferred by many because they were cheaper, easier to obtain when travelling in remote districts, and more sensitive and finer grained than film. For the largely middle-class readership of the journal – the amateur photographers from which the title took its name – whose identity and sociocultural status relied on producing photographic prints for exhibitions or competitions, touring for photographic purposes meant carrying a rather bulky and fragile camera apparatus. Since the late 1870s, quadricycles, tricycles and,

1 – 'Our Views', *Amateur Photographer*, 11 October 1895, 229; see also 'Autocars for Camerists', *Photographic News*, 29 May 1896, 343; and 'Notes and News', *Amateur Photographer*, 1 May 1896, 373–74.

2 – The motor show opened in Tumble Wells on 15 October. Carlton Reid, *Roads Were Not Built for Cars* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2015), 224.

3 – John Minnis, 'Practical yet Artistic: The Motor House, 1895–1914', in *Living, Leisure and Law: Eight Building Types in England 1800–1914*, ed. by Geoff Brandwood (Reading: Spire, 2010), 73–88 (73).



4 – Sara Dominici, “‘Cyclo-Photographers’, Visual Modernity, and the Development of Camera Technologies, 1880s–1890s”, *History of Photography*, 42, no. 1 (2018), 46–60.

5 – Ibid.; Michael Pritchard, ‘Who Were the Amateur Photographers?’, in *Either/And*, ed. by Annabella Pollen and Juliet Baillie (London: National Media Museum, 2012), (<https://web.archive.org/web/20170218022822/http://eitherand.org/reconsidering-amateur-photography/who-were-amateur-photographers/>); and A. E. Harrison, ‘The Competitiveness of British Cycle Industry, 1890–1914’, *Economic History Review*, 22 (1969), 288–89.

6 – Minnis, ‘Practical yet Artistic’, 73.

7 – ‘Cycle and Camera’ *Amateur Photographer*, 25 April 1905, 329.

8 – ‘Here and There’, *Motor-Car Journal*, 15 March 1902, 27.

9 – ‘Cycle and Camera’.

10 – C. U. K., ‘Photography for Motorists’, *The Motor*, 16 November 1909, 524.

11 – Craig Horner, “‘Modest Motoring’ and the Emergence of Automobility in the United Kingdom”, *Transfers*, 2, no. 3 (2012), 56–75 (57); see also Sean O’Connell, *The Car in British Society: Class, Gender, and Motoring, 1896–1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989).

12 – Pete Smith, *The Motor Car and the Country House* (Portsmouth: English Heritage, 2010), 4.

later, bicycles had offered the means to do that. By offering control over one’s mobility and independence from train timetables, cycling had enabled this group to travel further afield and, by doing so, to find more subjects to photograph – a relationship felt so close that these practitioners referred to themselves as ‘cyclo-photographers’.<sup>4</sup> Following the introduction of easier to operate cameras in the 1880s and the bicycle boom of the 1890s, when the cycling population grew exponentially across class lines, taking one’s camera on a cycling tour became de rigueur.<sup>5</sup> It thus seemed to this group that the automobile would bring the same benefits.

By the mid-1900s, with the number of automobiles soaring from sixteen thousand by 1906 to more than 150,000 by 1912,<sup>6</sup> many photographers had had an opportunity to test this promise. To those who came from cycling, the verdict was unfavourable. As the anonymous author of the *Amateur Photographer’s* ‘Cycle and Camera’ column wrote in 1905, ‘the motor car will never be the camera’s friend in the way that the bicycle is. The motor is in too much hurry. Motoring is motoring, and photography is photography; and to attempt to fuse the two is useless.’<sup>7</sup> Yet, as the motoring press almost unanimously saw it, ‘Photography adds a delight to motoring.’<sup>8</sup> Although ‘Cycle and Camera’ had predicted that ‘the increase in popularity of the motor car will produce a decrease in tourist photography’,<sup>9</sup> by 1909 *Motor* could remark that while ‘one cannot say that nearly every photographer is a motorist ... one certainly can say that nearly every motorist is a photographer’.<sup>10</sup> What caused such shifting and conflicted attitudes on the relationship between photography and the automobile?

To one extent, this split reflects the largely different class base of cycle and motorcar users, and the broadening of the photographic community. Although the British middle classes had demonstrated from the start a ‘ready and early inclination toward owner-driving’,<sup>11</sup> and it was them, not the aristocracy, ‘who were in fact the most numerous owners of new cars’,<sup>12</sup> it was the bicycle that was within the reach of the majority of leisure photographers, a group that by this time included the lower middle classes too. The motorists’ reputation as arrogant, and the debate over ownership of the road, created different factions within the public debate, including the photographic community. The popularisation of camera technology also meant that the reasons why people took pictures were now more diverse. The photographic press condemned the ‘camera fiend’, a photographer who intruded on strangers, and encouraged the cultivation of an artistic approach to photography, but it also recognised the multifaceted photographic identity of its readership and the desire to produce images of purely personal interest. To those committed to the artistic recognition of photography, such images had a higher artistic and cultural value than the holiday snaps taken by the growing number of photographers, which now included motorists too.

The cyclo-photographers’ response to the motorcar, however, cannot be explained through class conflict and technological and aesthetic antagonism alone. Many of the early motor pioneers were amateur photographers and had a background as cyclists too, and the photographic press itself conceded that the automobile had supported good photographic work amongst amateur photographers. Speed was also not the reason why cyclists rejected motoring, as this was not particularly different from what other forms of mobility offered and could have been controlled at will. Rather, cyclists’ views were rooted in a conceptualisation of photographic practice enabled by the body–machine synergy afforded by the bicycle, a synergy profoundly altered by motoring. This article explores why and how the experience of moving and seeing enabled by the new machine transformed photographic practice, and what the different responses that this development received tell us about the impact that the automobile, the latest

technological wonder of the Victorian age, had on an expanding photographic field. I start by looking at how motoring transformed people's bodily experiences, including visual ones, and then move to explore the social impact of motor touring in the context of the booming visual culture of automobilism that contributed to its popularisation.<sup>13</sup> This will provide the framework within which to consider how the use that motorists made of the camera ushered in a new machine-driven relationship with the world and, consequently, what human-machine relationship the cyclo-photographers instead desired for their world.

This article thus contributes to our understanding of the shared but severely underappreciated histories of photography and the automobile. Scholars have only recently begun to examine photography in relation to other media and technologies,<sup>14</sup> or to evaluate the role that material practices of automobilism have had on visualities.<sup>15</sup> This has led to considering photography primarily in connection with the history of moving pictures or with the artistic production of the contemporaneous avant-garde movements.<sup>16</sup> In Enda Duffy's words, 'If the still camera and still photography match the age of the railroads, then the movie camera and moving film match the era of the automobile'.<sup>17</sup> The argument here is that the aesthetic forms enabled by the new media technology were felt to best represent the 'new ways of seeing made possible by the new velocities of motion',<sup>18</sup> and consequently that the stillness of the photographic image felt anachronistic to this moving gaze. However, in exploring why some photographers' response to the automobile diverged from how they approached the bicycle, it is no longer possible to think about photography's role at this crucial moment in the history of modern visual culture simply in terms of its perceived success or failure in articulating new visual experiences. Set in the years preceding the First World War, when the thrill of speed and the desire for technological newness had yet to fully disclose the sweeping and devastating impact that such innovations could have on human life, the story of how different groups within the photographic world responded to the motorcar demands that we rethink the relationship between photographers and the ways of being modern made possible by different transport technologies as one that was central to negotiating established and emerging machine-driven visual epistemologies at the turn of the twentieth century.

### *New Experiences of Moving Through and Seeing the World*

'It's usually assumed', Carlton Reid writes, 'that motor cars evolved from horse-drawn carriages. This is not so.'<sup>19</sup> Contemporary commentators knew well that at the origin was the bicycle. As *Autocar* wrote in 1895, 'The cyclist and the cycle maker have paved the way for the autocar'.<sup>20</sup> Not only were the first motor vehicles created by attaching a motor to quadricycles and tricycles,<sup>21</sup> but the early motorists had, almost invariably, a cycling background. David Salomons, the organiser of the 1895 motor show mentioned earlier, was a trustee and life member of the Cyclists' Touring Club, the president of his local cycling club, the founder of the Royal Automobile Club and the president of the Self-Propelled Traffic Association.<sup>22</sup> The editor of *Autocar*, Henry Sturmey, was also the editor of *The Cyclist*. In 1879, he had been a chief consul of the Bicycle Touring Club (which became the Cyclists' Touring Club in 1883) and invented, with James Archer, the three-speed hub gear for bicycles. He was chairman of the Daimler Motor Company and later joined the Royal Automobile Club.<sup>23</sup> Like many others who came from cycling, both practised photography too. Salomons, whom *Amateur Photographer* described as 'one of the best friends photography has ever had',<sup>24</sup> was a member of two London-based groups, the Camera Club<sup>25</sup> and the Royal Photographic Society.<sup>26</sup> Sturmey edited the journal *Photography* too (which was later

13 – In this article, I use 'automobilism' because this is the term used to describe the new motorcar world in the primary sources that I have consulted. For the more recent concept of 'automobility', which is generally used to analyse the motorcar societies that followed, see John Urry 'The "System" of Automobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21, nos. 4–5 (2004), 25–39; and *Automobilities*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, N. J. Thrift and John Urry (London: SAGE, 2005).

14 – *Photography and Other Media in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. by Nicoletta Leonardi and Simone Natale (State College: Penn State University Press, 2018).

15 – Peter Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

16 – See, for example, Lynda Nead, *The Haunted Gallery: Painting, Photography and Film around 1900* (London: Yale University Press, 2007); Enda Duffy, *The Speed Handbook: Velocity, Pleasure, Modernism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009); and Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1995).

17 – Duffy, *Speed Handbook*, 161. For a discussion of the relationship between visual media and the motorcar in other countries, see also Jacques Damade, *Jacques-Henri Lartigue* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989); Sara Dominici, 'How to go from A to B', *Source Magazine*, 97 (2019), 22–25; Herman Glaser et al., *Das Automobil in der Kunst, 1886–1986* (Munich: Haus der Kunst, 1986); and D. B. Tubbs, *Art and the Automobile* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978); see also the texts in notes 16 and 112.

18 – Duffy, *Speed Handbook*, 161.

19 – Reid, *Roads Were Not Built for Cars*, xiii.

20 – 'The Autocar', *Autocar*, 2 November 1895, 1.

21 – Several British bicycle companies started producing motorcycles from the early 1900s. Andy Tallone, *Classic British Motorcycles: An Illustrated History* (Havertown: Key Publishing, 2022).

22 – Reid, *Roads Were Not Built for Cars*, 19–20, 28, 124, 185.

23 – *Ibid.*, 18.

24 – 'Our Views', *Amateur Photographer*, 11 October 1895, 229.

25 – 'Autocars at the Camera Club', *Autocar*, 30 November 1895, 55–57 (55).

26 – 'Alphabetical List of Exhibitors', *Photographic Journal*, 27 September 1890, 22.

27 – David Webb, ‘Sturmey, John James Henry (1857–1930)’, in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, ed. by John Hannavy (London: Routledge, 2008), 1358.

28 – ‘Answers’, *Amateur Photographer*, 15 January 1886, 36.

29 – ‘Societies’ Notes’, *Amateur Photographer*, 21 October 1892, 291.

30 – Reginald Fellows, ‘Non-Stop Runs by Trains in Great Britain, 1845–1938’, *The Journal of Transport History*, 2, no. 1 (1955), 1–10; and J. A. Mangan, *Reformers, Sports, Modernizers: Middle-Class Revolutionaries* (London: Routledge, 2012).

31 – See, for example, ‘Bicycle Tours – And a Moral’, *C.T.C. Monthly Gazette*, October 1894, 292–94; and ‘Across Scotland on the Wheel’, *Scottish Cyclists*, 2 March 1898, 208.

32 – For a discussion of how this change of motion manifested itself, see Gijs Mom, ‘Civilized Adventure as a Remedy for Nervous Times: Early Automobility and *Fin-de-Siècle* Culture’, *History of Technology*, 23 (2001), 157–90, 161–67.

33 – See, for example, Lynda Nead, ‘Paintings, Films and Fast Cars: A Case Study of Hubert von Herkomer’, *Art History*, 25, no. 2 (2002), 240–55 (253); and Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture*, 72–97.

34 – H. O. Duncan, ‘Through London on a Motor Cycle’, *Autocar*, 1 August 1896, 471–73 (471).

35 – Motorcycles and motorcars were generally discussed within the same remit in terms of new physical sensations and visual experiences. Because cyclo-photographers’ main perceived antagonist was the automobilist, this article focuses on the specific differences between cycling and the automobile.

36 – ‘Cycle versus Motor’, *Motor-Car Journal*, 17 March 1899, 24.

37 – J. Reginald Egerton, ‘Tours and Runs’, *Autocar*, 14 July 1900, 668.

38 – Ellen Edmunds, ‘Recollections of Short Tours’, *Autocar*, 21 December 1901, 635.

39 – ‘A Trip to Hindhead’, *Motorist and Traveller*, 5 April 1905, 342–44 (344).

40 – ‘A Trip in an Autocar’, *Autocar*, 10 July 1897, 444–45.

absorbed into *Amateur Photographer*),<sup>27</sup> wrote for both *Amateur Photographer* and *Photographic News*, was the secretary of the Cyclists’ Photographic Exchange Club<sup>28</sup> and, in 1892, was one of the judges of the Stanley Show Photographic Exhibition.<sup>29</sup>

It is unsurprising, then, that both the photographic community and the pioneer motoring movement initially viewed the automobile as a touring machine that would extend the capabilities of the bicycle. However, if both technologies offered mobile independence and freedom from the constrictions of organised leisure, people soon realised that the experience that the automobile delivered was fundamentally different from that of cycling. Speed was not, in itself, the reason why the two technologies were seen to differ. Following the English Motor Car Act of 1903, the speed limit was raised from 12 to 20 miles per hour (mph), and, although this was not always respected, the roads were crowded with horse-drawn vehicles and pedestrians, which limited how fast one could go. A high speed could also be reached by travelling by train or by cycling.<sup>30</sup> While the average cycling speed on a level or slightly uphill road was only about 10–12 mph,<sup>31</sup> thrill-seeking ‘scorchers’ descending a well-surfaced hill easily surpassed the average motor speed. Rather, what was new was the experience of accelerated and arrested motion controlled by the driver, which was felt by the passengers too when the vehicle’s speed and direction of travel changed.<sup>32</sup> In the motorcar, speed *felt* different because of a new sensory relationship between the body and the machine.<sup>33</sup>

That motor vehicles, including motor cycles, produced ‘altogether a new sensation’,<sup>34</sup> as one motorist wrote in 1896, was a view unanimously shared by the motoring community.<sup>35</sup> ‘My first motor journey’, *Motor-Car Journal* wrote in 1899:

opened up for me a new world of pleasure. There was a new excitement in whirling along familiar high-ways without effort, quickly and easily surmounting hills [...] On and on and on in the bracing air, moving only a tiny lever now and then to slacken or increase the speed at will.<sup>36</sup>

Contemporaneous accounts concurred that this experience was so visceral that words seemed to fail. Comments such as ‘the sensation was too perfect for words’,<sup>37</sup> ‘What pen can do justice to the delights of touring in a motor car?’<sup>38</sup> or ‘I cannot describe the run out’<sup>39</sup> abound. Notwithstanding this difficulty, their written testimonials bring us close to what caused this ‘novel sensation’,<sup>40</sup> and what it meant to them. Consider, for example, the travelogue written by Arundell Whatton after a one-week winter tour in France in 1901. In a passage that exemplifies how early motorcar enthusiasts articulated their experiences, Whatton recounted:

The wind continued extremely strong, and would have made driving unpleasant had not one been prepared for it, with a close-fitting cap. But even at the worst of times, in the rain and blast, there was always the fascination of listening to the unvarying pulsation of the motor, and in feeling with what tremendous disregard the car was urged on in the teeth of nature’s opposition. With a really big motor this is impressive. On an ocean steamer one may enjoy somewhat the same sensation, but then the whole affair is so huge that the vital organs of it are hardly within one’s perception, nor of course the control of it in one’s own hands. However, there is a weak spot in most of our arrangements wherein nature will have the best of us. And here it was our tires – our tires again. Down they went, now on this side, now on that. We patched and mended valves and put in new air chambers the whole day long. It became at length a regular mode of progress – ‘bump, bump, bump’; halt – a tire flat; cigarettes; get the cover off and a sound tube in, pump up, or, if possible, get someone else to; run ten kilos, and repeat the process. [...] Our progress became a series of wild dashes and delays. There were splendid straight lengths of perfect road, and we were doing kilometre after kilometre well under the minute. It was simply grand, sitting down tight and holding on every now



Figure 1. Photographer unknown, 'Advertisement for A. W. Gamage's Motor Catalogue', *Motor-Car Journal*, 23 May 1903, xv. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.LON 883 [1903].

and then where there was a turn or piece of rough, to hear the music of the fourth speed rising in pitch higher and higher, to feel the air rushing past one's face, and see the earth and trees, and the milestones too, skimming away behind. Never a slack, never a swerve. This is the next thing to flying. It may not be luxurious; it may not be even exactly comfortable; superior persons may make fun of it as the scorchers' method of seeing the country; but, by Jove, it is thrilling, it is intoxicating.<sup>41</sup>

41 – Arundell Whatton, 'A Winter Run' *Motor-Car Journal*, 26 October 1901, 613-14.

Like most models at this time, the 12 horsepower (h.p.) Panhard-Levassor motorcar on which Whatton travelled was open – the frequent crashes made glass screens too dangerous – and thus it exposed passengers to the elements. Reaching a reported speed of more than 60 kilometres per hour, the equivalent of approximately 37 mph, and travelling in the middle of February,<sup>42</sup> Whatton appeared unperturbed by the 'extremely strong' wind and 'rain and blast', not to mention that roads were muddy on rainy days and raised clouds of dust on dry ones. Figure 1 exemplifies both what these vehicles looked like and some of the accessories that offered protection from wind, rain, dust, insects and glare, while figure 8, in the following section, illustrates how the body was shielded from the cold. This was something that Whatton also had described at length earlier in his account.<sup>43</sup>

42 – Ibid., 597.

43 – Ibid.

- 44 – Eefje Cleophas, Stefan Krebs and Gijs Mom, *Sound and Safe: A History of Listening Behind the Wheel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).
- 45 – Ruth Livesey, *Writing the Stage Coach Nation: Locality on the Move in Nineteenth Century British Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).
- 46 – Gijs Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism: Emergence and Persistence of the Car, 1895–1940* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 192–93. See also Ruth Brandon, *Automobile: How the Car Changed Life* (London: Macmillan, 2002).
- 47 – C. E. Abbott, ‘Tours and Runs’, *Autocar*, 16 June 1900, 575.
- 48 – Dorothy Edmunds, ‘A Cruise on Land – or the Log of a Motor-Car’, *Motor-Car Journal*, 3 November 1900, 583–84 (583).
- 49 – Onlooker, ‘Home Notes’, *Photographic News*, 5 February 1904, 86.
- 50 – That transport technologies do not simply facilitate movement has been amply studied; see, for example, Mark Seltzer, *Bodies and Machines* (London: Routledge, 2014); and Colin Divall and George Revill, ‘Cultures of Transport: Representation, Practice and Technology’, *Journal of Transport History*, 26, no. 1 (March 2005), 99–111.
- 51 – Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The Railway Journey: The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 1977), 9.
- 52 – *Ibid.*, 10.
- 53 – Douglas Burgess, *Engines of Empire: Steamships and the Victorian Imagination* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2016), 11.
- 54 – ‘Touring by Motor-Car’, *Motor-Car Journal*, 15 August 1903, 459. For a discussion of the automobile’s association with masculinity and of how the female figure was associated with fast cars, see Nead, *Haunted Gallery*; and Sarah Wintle, ‘Horses, Bikes and Automobiles: New Woman on the Move’, in *The New Woman in Fiction and Fact: Fin-de-Siecle Feminisms*, ed. by Angeliue Richardson and Chris Willis (Houndsmill: Palgrave MacMillan, 2001), 66–78.
- 55 – Mary Kennard, ‘Whitsuntide Jottings’, *Motor-Car Journal*, 9 June 1900, 254.

Although the motorist’s body was thus physically constrained and, as Whatton conceded, motoring ‘may not be even exactly comfortable’, his description is one of heightened sensory perceptions, of a body emphatically transformed by the ‘thrilling’ and ‘intoxicating’ experience. Such embodied sensations were triggered by atmospheric effects (e.g., the ‘feel’ of the air on one’s face), by changes in the direction and speed of the vehicle (e.g., ‘holding on ... where there was a turn’), by the optical effect of the landscape ‘skimming away behind’ and by the vehicle itself, to which motorists listened carefully both to detect problems (e.g., “‘bump, bump, bump”’; halt – a tire flat’) but also because, to these early enthusiasts, the sound stood for the power of the automobile (e.g., ‘to hear the music’).<sup>44</sup> The other two main sensory stimuli that Whatton would have experienced – the mechanical vibrations and the smell of petrol in the gasoline-powered models (early motorcars could also be powered by steam or electricity) – were often strategically ignored (after all, one of the aims of these accounts was to promote motoring).

To explain what this new sensation felt like, Whatton evoked travelling on ‘an ocean steamer’, explaining that the automobile overcame the limits of this steam-powered technology by intensifying the physical sensations created (no longer ‘hardly within one’s perception’) and by bringing the experience under personal control (previously not ‘in one’s own hands’). As he concluded, ‘This is the next thing to flying’. There is a long tradition of using the flight metaphor to describe transport experiences,<sup>45</sup> so it is unsurprising that it was applied to motoring too. This has been interpreted, as in the words of the motorcar historian Gijs Mom, to express ‘powerful fantasies of independence, happiness, power, personal sovereignty, and freedom’.<sup>46</sup> Conversely, descriptions of motoring as ‘land yachting’,<sup>47</sup> motor tours as ‘A Cruise on Land’<sup>48</sup> and the vehicle itself as a ‘good ship’<sup>49</sup> or, as Whatton put it, ‘an ocean steamer’ have largely been overlooked by the scholarship. Yet they offer an important perspective on people’s own understanding of motoring’s transformative impact on how they moved through and saw their surroundings.<sup>50</sup>

In his seminal study of the nineteenth-century railway, Wolfgang Schivelbusch notes that ‘The earliest perception of how steam power dissolved that mimetic relationship [with nature] can be found in descriptions of the first steam-powered ships’.<sup>51</sup> This loss of contact was experienced, as he explains in relation to travelling by train, because ‘steam power appeared to be independent of outward nature and capable of prevailing against it’.<sup>52</sup> Douglas Burgess notes that steamships augmented these effects by ‘divorcing passengers from the landscape altogether, creating self-contained artificial communities onboard for weeks rather than hours, becoming worlds unto themselves whereby passengers would descend (quite literally) into brief and transient contact with foreign ports’.<sup>53</sup> More than the railway and, as we will see, in opposition to cycling, motoring created the feeling of being detached from one’s surroundings, taking this one step further because it gave motorists control over motion; in other words, it allowed them to personally and directly prevail over nature. Comments such as ‘with what tremendous disregard the car was urged on in the teeth of nature’s opposition’ thus indicate how this new sensation shaped how motorists conceptually related to their surroundings. ‘For the automobilist’, as *Motor-Car Journal* wrote in 1903, ‘discovers within himself a desire for new worlds to conquer’.<sup>54</sup>

This physical and mental detachment from one’s environment did not vanish the moment the vehicle stopped. As Whatton narrated, the experience of motoring was not a continuous motion but ‘a series of wild dashes and delays’ caused by mechanical breakdowns, punctures and, as another put it, ‘the fear of sideslips’.<sup>55</sup> Similarly to the steamship, which briefly docked to enable short-lived contacts with new places before returning the passengers to the familiarity of the vessel, so the automobile created an experience of travelling that alternated inhabiting the self-

contained and self-controlled known space of the automobile with descending into always new and othered worlds. The contrast between these spaces was heightened by the unprecedented levels of dust, noise and smell that, as noted earlier, these early vehicles produced, and which diminished the motorists' perception of local light, smells and sounds.

Such bodily grounding of the motor experience shaped how people interpreted the new visual perception of their surroundings too. As it has been shown, 'visuality is always multi-modal'.<sup>56</sup> Gijs Mom writes, for example, that the motorcar-induced sense of dominating the world fuelled 'the narcissistic perspective of the observer who places himself at the static center stage, seeing the environment pass by at high speed'.<sup>57</sup> Motorists often remarked on the optical illusion of the landscape 'skimming away behind', as Whattson noted, and on the expanded field of vision afforded by their elevated position and accelerated movement. Comments such as 'nothing escaped the eye; for there was a breadth of view from the elevation of that dog-cart back seat and an extended vision that was as delightful as it was novel',<sup>58</sup> 'Absurd to say the motorist cares only for the drum, drum, drum of his engine and is deaf and blind to pleasing sounds and sights ... we had eyes wherewith to admire Mother Nature'<sup>59</sup> and we 'sail merrily down the slope, our eyes delighted with the ever-changing pictures'<sup>60</sup> were common in this period. They speak not only of seeing more things, but also, in the same way in which motorists experienced the detachment from the natural world as a conquest, of feeling in control of such visual stimuli.

That the automobile created new ways of seeing is well known. Duffy, for example, writes that 'The automobile offered the eye new challenges',<sup>61</sup> while Lynda Nead similarly argues that it produced a 'motorised vision'<sup>62</sup> that in turn fostered 'a new form of subjectivity: privileged, individualistic and phenomenological'.<sup>63</sup> These visual experiences have often been aligned to the development of a cinematic vision and its apparatus as *the* technology that allowed for the processing and conceptualising of modernity.<sup>64</sup> As Walter Benjamin influentially claimed, the numbing effects of this new visual world were curbed, through its ability to manipulate such stimuli, by film.<sup>65</sup> As we will see later in this article, the photographers who came from the experience of cycling similarly thought that the practices of observation made possible by motoring could only offer an impoverished way of living and knowing, and were thus vocal supporters of those practices enabled instead by combining photography and cycling as a way to maintain a grasp of the world. For the motoring community, however, their new visual experiences represented the triumphal enhancement of their bodily functions, the capacity of the human body to augment its physiological prowess through the aid of a machine. Crucially, why they thought that to be case was a product not only of the material practices discussed in this section, but also, as I shall now turn to, of a new visual realm that had made them an emblem of modernity.

### *The Visual Culture of Motor Touring*

While previous transport technologies had also attracted media and popular interest, and their users had likewise sought to document their experiences, the automobile was the first to be met by a photographic apparatus mature enough to permit the substantial production and circulation of its photographic reproductions. By this time, access to photographic technology had vastly increased, while developments in halftone reproduction techniques greatly facilitated the incorporation of photographs alongside text.<sup>66</sup> Well-known figures and events from the motoring world, including competitions, shows and incidents, were regularly featured and parodied in titles such as *Illustrated London News*, *Graphic* and *Punch*, but it was the blooming motoring press, united in advancing the rights of motorists and in

56 – Initially argued in Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle and Modern Culture* (London: MIT Press, 1999); and applied to mobility studies by Peter Merriman et al., 'Landscape, Mobility and Practice', *Social and Cultural Geography*, 9, no. 2 (2008), 191–212 (201).

57 – Mom, *Atlantic Automobilmism*, 163; see also Edward Dimendberg, 'The Will to Motorization: Cinema, Highways, and Modernity', *October*, 73, (1995), 91–137; and Merriman, *Mobility, Space and Culture*, 81.

58 – 'A Pleasant Experience', *Motor-Car Journal*, 17 November 1899, 580–81.

59 – Kennard, 'Whitsuntide Jottings', 254.

60 – Douglas Fawcett, 'Some Experiences on a Light Car', *Motor*, 23 April 1904, 57–59 (59).

61 – Duffy, *Speed Handbook*, 161.

62 – Nead, *Haunted Gallery*, 162.

63 – Nead, 'Paintings, Films and Fast Cars', 250; see also Jeffrey T. Schnapp, 'Crash (Speed as Engine of Individuation)', *Modernism/Modernity*, 6, no. 1 (January 1999), 1–49.

64 – *Cinema and Modernity*, ed. by Murray Pomerance (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2006).

65 – Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. by Harry Zone (London: Verso Classics, 1997 [1939]), 175.

66 – Gerry Beegan, *The Mass Image: A Social History of Photomechanical Reproduction in Victorian London* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

67 – C. L. Freeston, 'Automobile Literatures', in *Motors and Motor-Driving*, ed. by Alfred Charles William Harmsworth (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), 397–401.

68 – *Autocar* and *Motor-Car Journal* were priced at three pence per issue, and *Motor* at one pence.

69 – David Jeremiah, *Representations of British Motoring* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 12; see also Philip Van Doren Stern, *A Pictorial History of the Automobile, as Seen in Motor Magazine, 1903–1953* (New York: Viking, 1953).

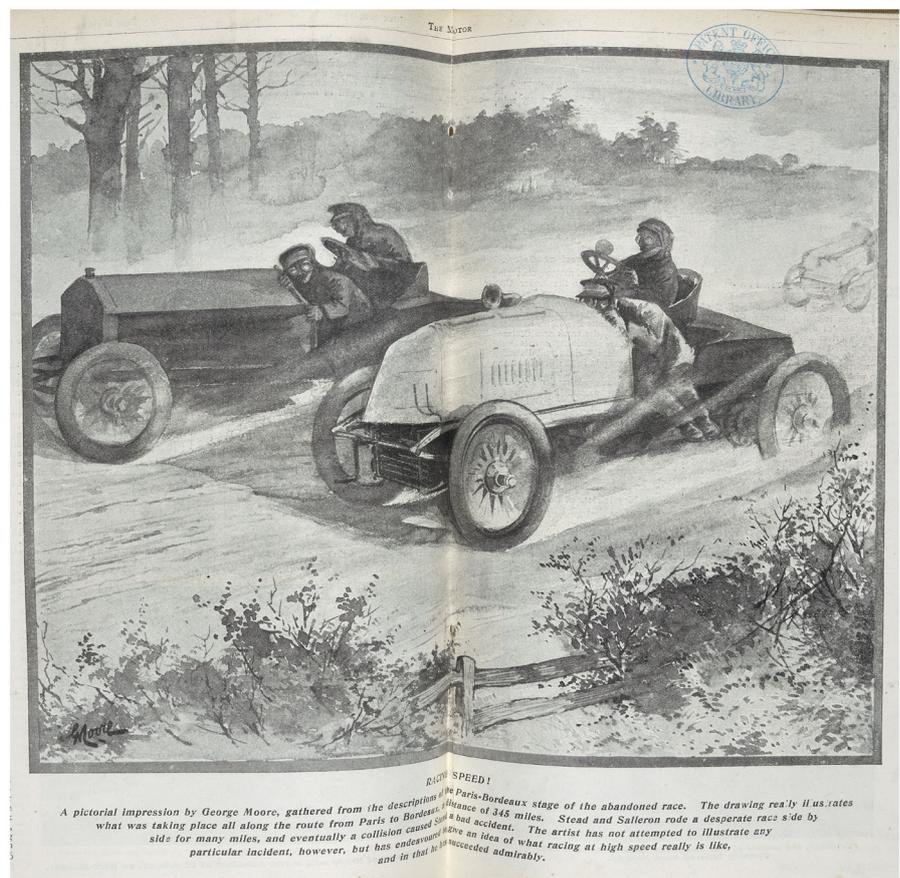
70 – 'The Camera and the Car', *Photographic News*, 21 September 1906, 757–58.

71 – George Moore, 'Racing Speed!', *Motorcar*, 3 July 1903, 384.

convincing onlookers of the benefits of a still rather dangerous and unreliable technology, that shaped the visual culture that motorists themselves looked up to.<sup>67</sup> *Autocar*, which launched in 1895 as the first weekly in Britain for the enthusiast motorists, was initially mostly textual (the exception being Sturmey's own photographs). It was followed in 1896 by the equally technical and text-heavy *Automotor and Horseless Vehicle Journal*. The first truly pictorial publication was *Motor-Car Journal* (1899), which made extensive use of photographs to engage a growing more general readership. *Motor Cycling and Motoring* (1902, renamed *Motor* in 1903), for the middle-class enthusiasts, found its niche by using primarily illustrations by contemporary artists. Priced at six pence, the glossy upmarket *Car (Illustrated)* (1902) and *Motorist and Traveller* (1905), favoured by the wealthier motor-owners, combined instead photographic reproductions and chromolithographic prints.<sup>68</sup> This 'media revolution'<sup>69</sup> gave an unprecedented visibility to the motoring movement. As *Photographic News* put it in 1906, 'In time the history of automobilism will owe much to photography, through the agency of which we are able to secure permanent records of its progress and advancement'.<sup>70</sup>

Today, the representation of the new velocity of motoring is perhaps the best-known aspect of this visual culture. Figure 2, the illustration of a racing event, is exemplary of the emerging desire to represent this new experience by using brush-marks and blurring to recreate the aerodynamic movement of the vehicle and its visual apprehension. As *Motor* explained, 'The artist [...] has endeavour to give an idea of what racing at high speed really is like'.<sup>71</sup> Conversely, photographs such as those in 'Snapshots in Phoenix Park' (figure 3), which accompanied an article about the speed trials that took place in Dublin in 1903, demonstrate, in their attempt at

Figure 2. George Moore, 'Racing Speed!', *Motorcar*, 3 July 1903, 384. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: Document Supply 5970.000000 Science, Technology & Business (P) VJ 00 -E(6).



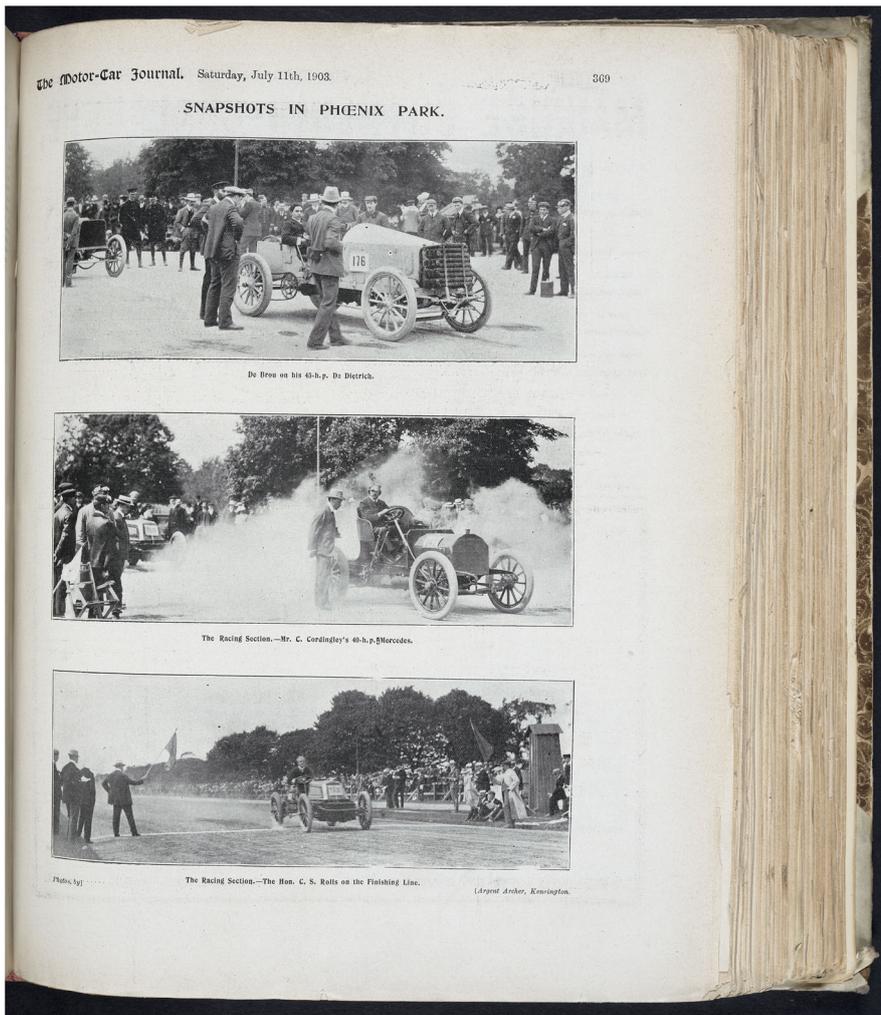


Figure 3. Argent Archer, 'Snapshots in Phoenix Park', *Motor-Car Journal*, 11 July 1903, 369. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.LON 883 [1903].

representing movement, why photographs were felt to be inadequate to the task. The three reproductions were cropped to a rectangular shape to encourage the readers' eyes to travel along each image from left to right, thus mimicking the 'Bright sparkling eyes' that, as the accompanying article reported, 'smilingly greeted the motorists as they dashed along the straight course'.<sup>72</sup> This was an effort to inject a sense of movement into static images, because if the camera could now capture fast-moving objects (hence the use of 'snapshot' in the caption), it did so by rendering them motionless.

However, what preoccupied the motoring community was, first of all, turning motoring into a socially accepted practice. With the number of automobiles on British roads increasing, so had the complaints about the danger that they posed to other road users. Particularly in rural areas, the new vehicle was seen as an annoying intrusion (a reaction that had been provoked by the bicycle too) and the motorists as arrogant urbanites disrupting the social space of the road. The perceived matter-of-factness of photographs was thus given a documentary and authenticating role in order to support the idea that the new technology could deliver a new way of living defined by freedom, emancipation, autonomy as well as reliability and safety. For example, when the exclusive – from 1907 Royal – Automobile Club, founded in 1897, began organising tours, demonstrations and trials, photographs were harnessed to bring home to ordinary people the new world of motoring.<sup>73</sup>

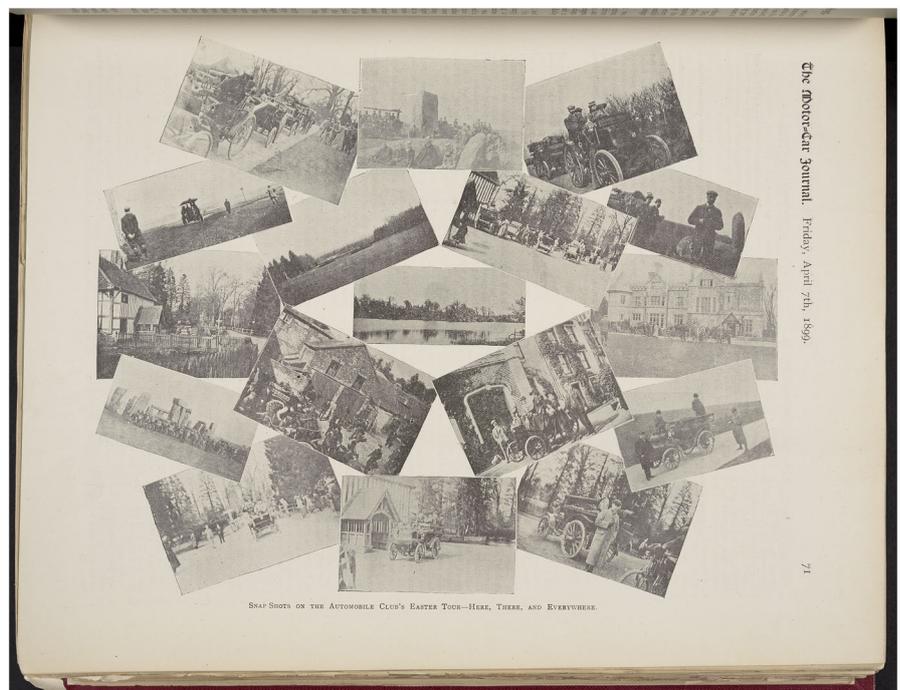
72 – 'Speed Trials in Phoenix Park', *Motor-Car Journal*, 11 July 1903, 368.

73 – Piers Brendon, *The Motoring Century: The Story of the Royal Automobile Club* (London: Bloomsbury/RAC, 1997).

Figure 4. Judd, 'The Automobile Club's Easter Tour - Stonehenge', *Motor-Car Journal*, 7 April 1899, 68. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.LON 168 [1899].



Figure 5. VV AA [various artists, unknown], 'Snap Shots on the Automobile Club's Easter Tour - Here, There, and Everywhere', *Motor-Car Journal*, 7 April 1899, 71. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.LON 168 [1899].



Consider figures 4 and 5, taken during the club's six-day Easter tour of 1899. Figure 4 shows two photographs of the tour participants posing at Stonehenge taken by a professional photographer, Judd. Many of the images used by the press

to illustrate the work of the Automobile Club, however, were taken by the motorists themselves – ‘the ‘Kodak’ artists’<sup>74</sup> – like those in figure 5. The recurring presence of the automobile signalled the elite social and economic status of their participants and, concurrently, reinforced how access to many of these places was enabled by the vehicle itself – both physically, because motorists could reach more destinations, and socially, because membership of the club introduced one to fellow motor owners of means. These images encapsulated an idea of modern living in which the vehicle operated both as a convenient form of transport and as a social and cultural enabler. That many of these photographs were by the motorists themselves reinforced their evidentiary value. As stated in the caption to figure 5, ‘Snap Shots on the Automobile Club’s Easter Tour – Here, There, and Everywhere’, the photographs were presented as embodying the idiosyncratic experiences of the individual participants and, therefore, as providing an authentic sense of the event. Within the photographic press, ‘snapshot’ was used to distinguish the work of the self-appointed serious amateur photographers from those who left the processing of their own images to others. For the motoring press, however, it was used either to reference the freezing of motion, as seen earlier, or, when used in relation to the motorists’ own photographs, to stand for the unmediated recording of what mattered to this group.

The motor trials and races organised to promote the reliability of the automobile and to boost the British motoring industry likewise received extensive photographic coverage. Here, too, photographs aimed to prove that the vehicles were fit for purpose and to project an idea of motoring as fashionable, pleasurable and safe. Take, for example, the first major touring event in Britain to receive substantial media coverage, the Automobile Club’s 1000 Miles Trial of 1900. The journey was extensively reported

74 – ‘The Automobile Club’s Easter Tour’, *Autocar*, 8 April 1899, 288–90 (289).

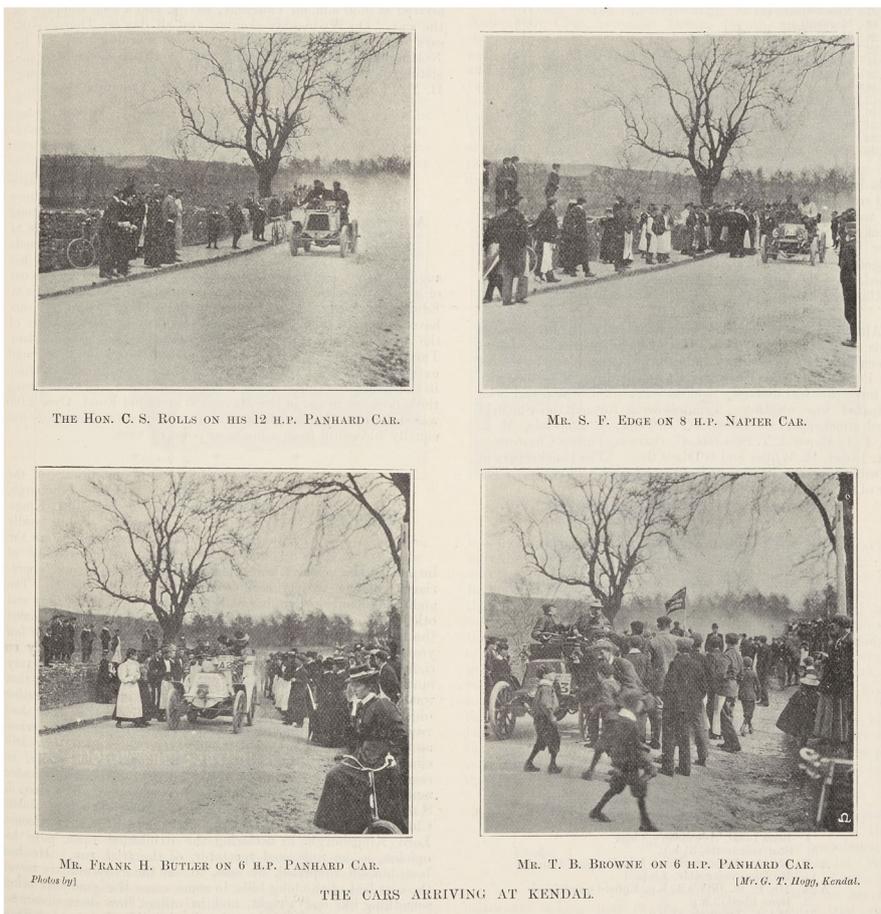


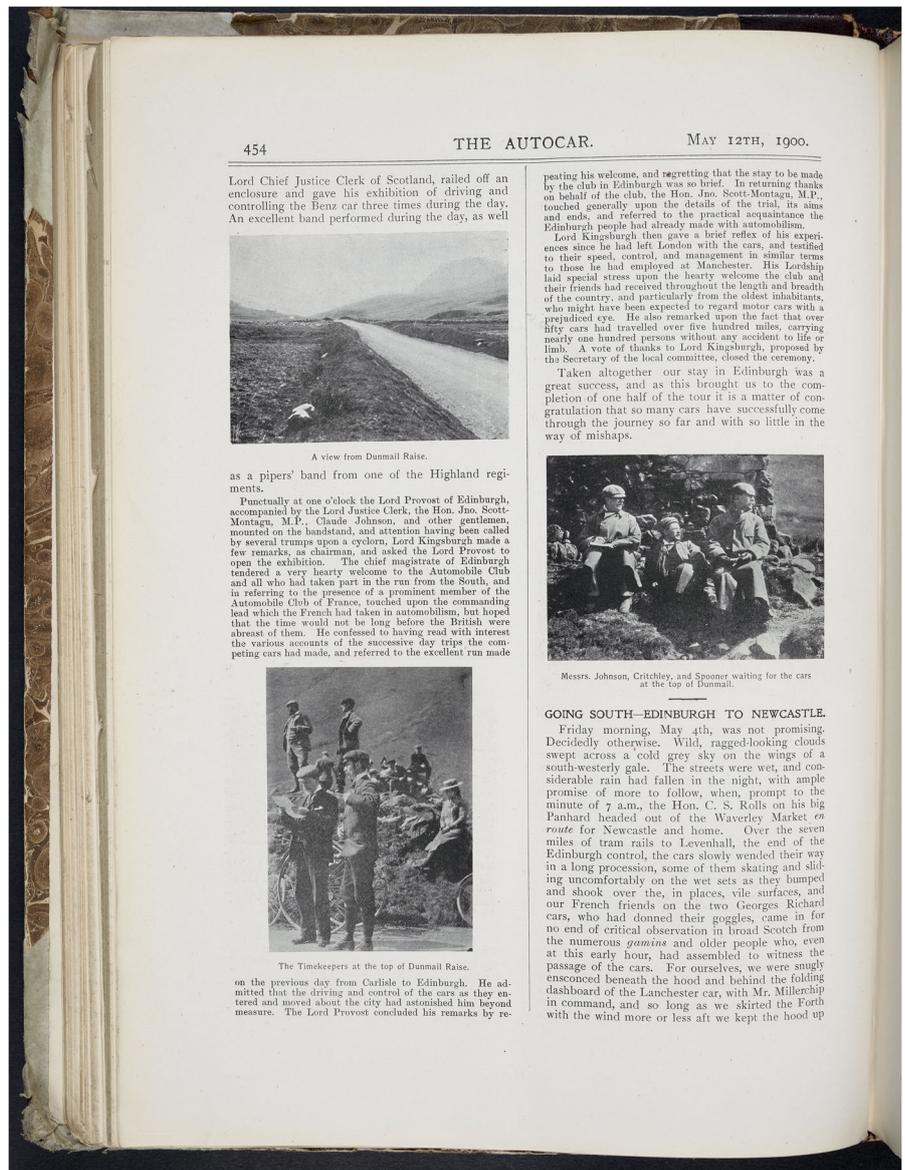
Figure 6. G. T. Hogg, ‘The Cars Arriving at Kendal’, *Motor-Car Journal*, 12 May 1900, 175. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.LON 396 [1900].

75 – A search for the sentence ‘1000 Miles Trial’ in the British Newspaper Archive returns more than one hundred articles about the event for the months of April and May 1900.

76 – ‘The Automobile Club’s 1000 Miles Trial. Newcastle to Leeds’, *Autocar*, 12 May 1900, 454.

in the local press,<sup>75</sup> but it was motoring journals that gave it a visual dimension. As *Autocar* noted, ‘There were photographers galore, including a cinematographer, who “wound off” the progress of the cars as they came along.’<sup>76</sup> In figure 6, a series of four about ‘The Cars Arriving at Kendal’, the picture frames get progressively more crowded with people greeting the motorists, so much so that Browne’s Panhard (bottom right) is barely visible. The sense of excitement for the arrival of the motorists is similarly conveyed by two of the images in figure 7 (bottom left and right), which, by showing onlookers waiting for the vehicles, also reinforced the idea of motoring as a spectacle. Additionally, the recurring presence of bicycles in figure 6 and, at the bottom left of figure 7, of what looks like a quadricycle, reminds us that the automobile entered a social fabric that had only recently been transformed by the cycle technology. For the supporters of the automobile, these images would thus also have captured a by-then-old technology waiting for the arrival of an allegedly superior one. Together with photographs of the motorists posing on their vehicles, of the crowds who met the motorists or who visited the exhibitions planned along the itinerary to inspect the machines up close, and of particularly challenging road sections, these images told the story of an advancing modernity cheered on by an expectant public, a view supported by the textual rhetoric that surrounded it. The photographs amplified such reach in

Figure 7. Photographer unknown, ‘The Automobile Club’s 1000 Miles Trial. Newcastle to Leeds’, *Autocar*, 12 May 1900, 454. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.EW S924-6 [1900].



time and space, implicitly telling the motoring community that the eyes of the world were on them.

If, then, photographs of racing and endurance events contributed, as Jeremiah writes, to the idea of ‘the motorist as hero, motoring as an heroic adventure, and the motor-car as the reliable machine’,<sup>77</sup> those that documented the runs of the majority of motorists communicated instead how such excitement and freedom were potentially available to everybody. ‘Mishaps’ such as punctures and breakdowns abounded, which is unsurprising considering the still unreliable technology and often challenging road conditions, but they were taken, and presented, in the spirit of adventure (see later figure 9). Indeed, touring, racing and tinkering were, as the bicycle before it, part of that ‘tripartite adventure’ that the automobile offered.<sup>78</sup> The idea of the heroic adventurer on their faithful machine became the selling point for the emerging motoring industry too, which was eager to build a consumer base.<sup>79</sup> Furthermore, although some events such as those of the Automobile Club were organised, they were also exclusive ones that gave each motorist privileged access to rural areas through their personal control of the vehicle and participation in an exclusive network. Access to country houses, for instance, was precipitated by the motoring movement.<sup>80</sup> To add to the perceived prestige of motor touring was the fact that the general public incorrectly associated motoring with the aristocracy through to the 1910s, although, as Pete Smith shows, the conservatism and devotion to horse culture of many within this class actually made them later adopters of the automobile.<sup>81</sup> This perception was nonetheless fostered by journals such as *Car (Illustrated)*, edited by the Conservative Member of Parliament John (later Lord) Scott-Montagu of Beaulieu, and *Motorist and Traveller*, which chronicled, as noted in its inaugural editorial, the ‘custom of the richer classes to motor into the country’.<sup>82</sup>

It is significant, if one looks at the caricatures and cartoons published in titles such as *Motorcycling and Motoring* (later *Motor*), which used satire to reflect on the most striking features of automobilism, that the camera was a key prop in many of

77 – Jeremiah, *Representations of British Motoring*, 16. See also Horner, ‘Modest Motoring’, 63.

78 – Mom, *Atlantic Automobilism*, 64.

79 – Jeremiah, *Representations of British Motoring*.

80 – Smith, *Motor Car and the Country House*.

81 – *Ibid.*, 4

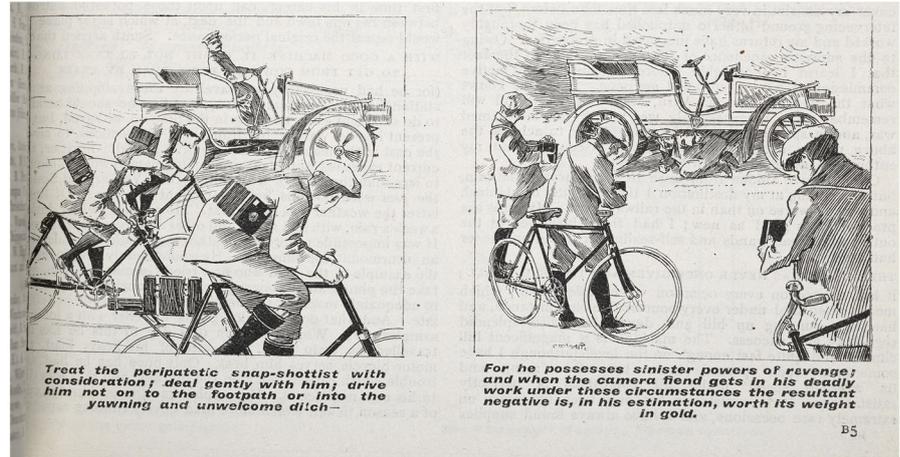
82 – ‘Editorial Announcement’, *Motorist and Traveller*, 7 January 1905, 1; see also the character of Mr. Toad, of Toad Hall, in the 1908 novel *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame, who represented the irresponsible upper-class motorist.



Figure 8. Photographer unknown, ‘Power to the Motor Costume’, *Motorcycling and Motoring*, 26 November 1902, 279.

© British Library Board. Shelfmark: Science, Technology & Business (P) VJ 00 -E(6).

Figure 9. Photographer unknown, *Motor*, 21 October 1903, 241. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: Document Supply 5970.000000 Science, Technology & Business (P) VJ 00 -E(6).



83 – ‘Power to the Motor Costume’, *Motorcycling and Motoring*, 26 November 1902, 279.

84 – *Motor*, 21 October 1903, 241.

85 – *Ibid.*

these scenes. A recurring theme that used the photographic apparatus was the one of the vain motorist posing with either their vehicle or, as in figure 8, in their ‘motor costume’.<sup>83</sup> By asking for ‘a particularly imposing photograph’ that, however, ‘smashed the camera’, this sketch found humour in both the garments and accessories that the open vehicles forced motorists to wear, and this group’s desire to possess an image of themselves as motorists. Another theme was one of the motorists as the subject of non-motorists’ cameras, as shown in figure 9. In this example, motorists were advised to be considerate towards the ‘peripatetic snap-shottist’ on a bicycle, with whom they shared the road, ‘for he possesses sinister powers of revenge’.<sup>84</sup> The ‘camera fiend’ perhaps served to comment on the public attention that motorists attracted as well as on the velocity of their vehicles, which could only be accurately photographed when not moving. This sketch might have also reminded readers of the story of the arrogant Hare who ridicules the slow-moving Tortoise only to be beaten by the Tortoise while taking a nap mid-race. But by ultimately mocking the cyclists, which as the caption quipped thought to have secured a negative, commonly still on glass, ‘in his estimation, worth its weight in gold’,<sup>85</sup> possibly because they did not understand that mishaps were part of the motoring experience, the vignette also associated the bicycle and the camera with an old-fashioned world and, by contrast, the automobile with the new machine age.

The early motorists thus learnt how to bring the automobile into their leisure lives within a burgeoning visual culture that had made them the protagonists of modern life. Simultaneously, we can see how the visual realm within which automobilism developed was intimately enmeshed with the social and class divide upon which the allure of motoring germinated. Consequently, how motorists interpreted their new experience of moving through and seeing the world cannot be divorced from the media attention and social status granted to those who toured by automobile. Kingsburgh’s ‘Snapshotting the 8 h.p. Napier Car – A Snapper Snapshotted’ (figure 10), which he took during the previously discussed Automobile Club’s 1000 Miles Trial of 1900, poignantly encapsulates the dynamic between seeing and being seen – and, as in this case, between photographing and being photographed – that defined the experience of motoring and is emblematic of the relationship between identity and spectacle in the twentieth century. More particularly, it illustrates how moving from the self-contained and self-controlled vehicle was imbued with the consciousness of one’s social and cultural privilege, and provided an opportunity to display the self. Therefore, the feeling of ‘control over’ discussed in the previous section cannot be reduced to technological determinism; rather, it should be considered in the

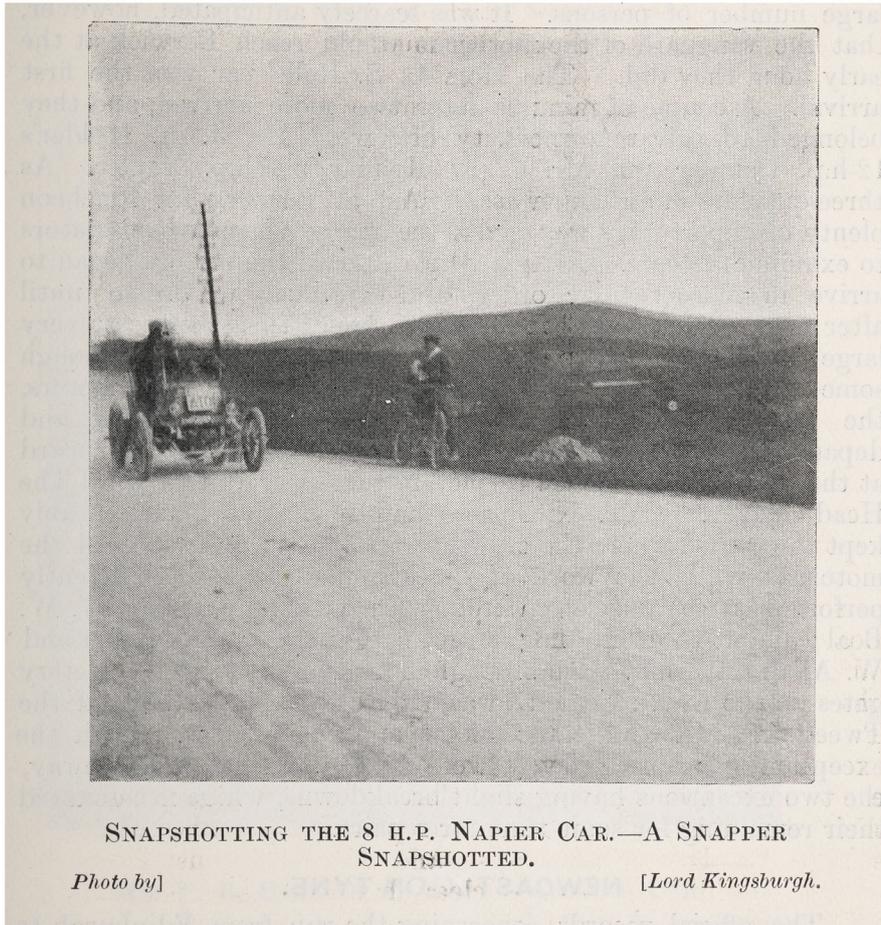


Figure 10. Kingsburgh, 'Snapshotting the 8 h.p. Napier Car – A Snapper Snapshotted', *Motor-Car Journal*, 12 May 1900, 173. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.LON 396 [1900].

context of the social relations that the automobile, as a luxury item and marker of privilege, reinforced rather than created. As the next section discusses, motorists' use of the camera reflects a way of interacting with the world and with others that was inseparable from living in this new mediated social realm.

#### *Established and Emerging Photographic Practices*

The motor touring community felt almost unanimously that 'the presence of a reliable camera will add materially to the pleasure of a trip'.<sup>86</sup> Supported by the development of easier to operate cameras targeted at tourists,<sup>87</sup> developing and printing services,<sup>88</sup> and a plethora of travel publications available, motoring fostered a new relationship with the English countryside and its heritage and, as an extension, accelerated its visual consumption.<sup>89</sup> Accordingly, the photographs taken by motorists ranged from the idiosyncratic and personal to those views and sites made popular by illustrated guidebooks, maps, and travel accounts, and included the work of many serious hobbyists too. Indeed, motorists' level of engagement with the camera varied. *Motor-Car Journal* regularly asked its readers for 'reminiscences of their wanderings by motor-car [...] accompanied with snapshots',<sup>90</sup> but also created content for those interested in the technical and artistic side of photography.<sup>91</sup> The target audience of *Car (Illustrated)*'s 'The Camera on the Car' by 'Tripod', a column launched in 1904 to give practical advice on photographic matters, was the motorist who enjoyed developing and printing their own images 'when away from home'.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, *Motorist and Traveller* published its readers' 'notes with snapshots'<sup>93</sup> as well as articles targeted specifically at amateur

86 – 'Touring and Photography', *Motor-Car Journal*, 12 July 1904, 444.

87 – Colin Ford, *The Story of Popular Photography* (Bradford: National Museum of Photography, Film and Television, 1989); and Michael Pritchard, 'The Development and Growth of British Photographic Manufacturing and Retailing 1839–1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, De Montfort University, 2010).

88 – Annabella Pollen, *More than a Snapshot: A Visual History of Photo Wallets* (London: Four Corner Books, 2023).

89 – Elizabeth Edwards, 'Out and About: Photography, Topography and Historical Imagination', in *Double Exposure: Memory and Photography*, ed. by O. Shevchenko (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2014), 177–210.

90 – 'Snapshots Wanted', *Motor-Car Journal*, 8 September 1899, 421; see also, 'Snapshots Wanted', *Motor-Car Journal*, 3 November 1899, 528; and 'Photographs Wanted', *Motor-Car Journal*, 15 March 1902, 20.

91 – 'Photography and Automobilmism', *Motor-Car Journal*, 12 October 1901, 580; 'Touring and Photography', *Motor-Car Journal*, 12 July 1904, 444; and 'Notes and Comments', *Amateur Photographer*, 25 September 1906, 265.

92 – ‘The Camera on the Car’, *Car (Illustrated)*, 1 May 1907, 497.  
 93 – ‘Notice to Contributors’, *Motorist and Traveller*, 22 March 1905, 261.  
 92 – ‘The Camera on the Car’, *Car (Illustrated)*, 1 May 1907, 497.  
 93 – ‘Notice to Contributors’, *Motorist and Traveller*, 22 March 1905, 261.  
 94 – See, for example, ‘Belgium. A Few Hints and Notes for Travellers and Photographers’, *Motorist and Traveller*, 10 March 1906, 177–79.  
 95 – Walter D. Welford, ‘Photography for Travellers’, *Motorist and Traveller*, 10 March 1906, 180.

96 – Lux, ‘Personal Paragraphs’, *Amateur Photographer*, 7 July 1899, 2; ‘Societies’ Meetings’, *Amateur Photographer*, 27 November 1906, 482; ‘Societies’ Meetings’, *Amateur Photographer*, 18 June 1897, 504; ‘Our Views’, *Amateur Photographer*, 6 January 1893, 2; ‘London Societies’, *Amateur Photographer*, 14 May 1897, 404; *Amateur Photographer*, 21 May 1897, 426; ‘Societies’ Meetings’, *Amateur Photographer*, 22 January 1892, 69–70; ‘Notes’, *Tricycling Journal*, 7 April 1886, 262; and Viscount Bury and G. Lacy Hillier, *Cycling* (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1887), 332.  
 97 – Dominici, ‘Cyclo-photographers’.

98 – ‘Photography for Travellers’, 180.

99 – Ibid.

100 – Percy Sheard, ‘Motor Photography’, *Amateur Photographer*, 23 August 1903, 143.  
 101 – ‘Cycle and Camera’.  
 102 – C. H. Hewitt, ‘The Camera and the Car’, *Amateur Photographer and Photographic News*, 10 July 1911, 30. Hewitt was a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, a teacher at the Polytechnic School of Photography and a regular contributor to the photographic press.

photographers.<sup>94</sup> In 1906, the journal appointed Walter D. Welford, a well-known photographer, cyclist, and writer, as its art editor and to author the column ‘Photography for Travellers’.<sup>95</sup>

If, then, there was widespread consensus that motoring and photography could inform one another, those who came from cycling could not reconcile the experience of photographing the world enabled by the motorcar with the one that they had come to treasure. Consider, for example, Welford’s experience – somebody whose career testifies to the close relationship between photography and cycling. Welford was a Fellow of the Royal Photographic Society, the President of the South Essex Camera Club, a member of the Hackney and South London Photographic Societies and, prior to joining *Motorist and Traveller*, had served as the editor of *Photographic Review of Reviews*, *Photographic Life*, *Cycle and Camera* and *Cycling*, had worked as sub-editor of *Photography*, had written a column about photography for *Bicycling News* and had been the first secretary of the Bicycle Touring Club (re-titled Cyclists’ Touring Club in 1883).<sup>96</sup> He was thus part of a group of camera enthusiasts for whom the bicycle had seemed to offer a natural support to their photographic project – a remarkable fusion between camera, bicycle and the human body exemplified by this group’s choice of referring to themselves as ‘cyclo-photographers’.<sup>97</sup> But while by 1906 Welford had clearly come to endorse the automobile, its relationship with photography was not presented as one of mutual support. In a column about motorists’ choice of a camera, he noted:

Much will depend also upon his inclinations, whether he is a motorist first and a photographer afterwards, or vice versa. If the former, he should study the question of ease in manipulation, the avoidance of complicated movements and the celerity with which the camera can be got ready for work. If he is a vice-versa, the choice will be much extended. My experience of the average motorist is that he is entirely striving to ‘get on further’, so that the speed with which the camera can first of all be got ready for work and afterwards closed up is a very important point.<sup>98</sup>

By framing the choice as one that depended on ‘whether he is a motorist first and a photographer afterwards, or vice versa’, Welford recognised that there were different approaches to using the camera, but that the term ‘photographer’ ought to be applied to those who prioritised the attentive work of selection, composition and lighting that came by working ‘with the tripod legs at full length’,<sup>99</sup> as he went on to comment. Simultaneously, and more fundamentally, this passage also reveals that he judged motorists and photographers to have antithetical ‘inclinations’; in other words, that they diverged in the engagement with one’s environment and, as extension, photographic practice. This view was widely shared amongst amateur photographers. Percy Sheard, a member of the Beverley Photographic Society, for example asked:

Does travelling in successful imitation of an express train enable the motorist to take in the beauties of the district? [...] I am far from saying there should be no motor business connected with camera work, but it should be before, or after, the day’s work is done, not during its execution.<sup>100</sup>

‘A. Wheelman’ noted that ‘Motoring is too much a hobby by itself to admit of its devotees practising any other hobby – e.g. photography – with any very intense enthusiasm’.<sup>101</sup> C. H. Hewitt similarly wondered: ‘are we to use the car as a means of getting about the country to photograph, or is the camera to be taken with us to illustrate incidents in our motor tours?’<sup>102</sup>

The initial expectation that the automobile would result in a ‘bicycle plus’ technology was soon replaced by the recognition that motoring and cycling belonged to

separate domains of mobility and visibility. Specifically, if the bicycle seemed to offer a natural support to the mode of looking valued by the community of amateur photographers, the motorcar introduced a new relationship with the world that some within this group actively rejected. Consider, for example, how cycling was compared to walking. In an article published in the *C.T.C. Monthly Gazette*, the official organ of the Cyclists' Touring Club, as part of the bicycle versus motor debate that had been rumbling in the journal, Hodgson, a reader, noted:

Twenty miles walked may have as much incident on the way, and furnish as much mental absorption of surroundings, as forty or fifty miles ridden. But all of us have not the means, the leisure, and the tough constitution of the 'Tramping Parson' of Filey, and therefore the balance of advantage is often with the bicycle, which approximates more closely to pedestrianism than any other mechanical means of locomotion.<sup>103</sup>

While for most people walking had historically been the main means of travelling, by the end of the nineteenth century it had become a recreational activity in itself, enjoyed across all classes as a matter of choice, rather than necessity, and was felt to enable an embodied and intimate awareness of the world.<sup>104</sup>

This was conducive to the practices of observation valued by many photographers – indeed, most members of the Cyclists' Touring Club were photographers too.<sup>105</sup> For example, Elizabeth Edwards shows that on-foot movement was central to the activities of the photographic survey movement,<sup>106</sup> composed almost entirely of amateur photographers, and of the photographic societies and camera clubs to which most of these practitioners belonged.<sup>107</sup> Similarly, pictorialism, the dominant photographic aesthetic that amateurs adhered to, 'was concerned with identifying and staying close to the supposedly eternal standards of nature, beauty and truth';<sup>108</sup> in other words, it relied on the mimetic relationship between the photographer and its surroundings.<sup>109</sup> Comments such as 'if a camera accompany the bicycle [...] the faculty of observation will have been sharpened',<sup>110</sup> which appeared regularly in the photographic press, corroborate the view that, like walking, the bicycle was seen to make the photographer more attuned to their world. 'The cycle is to the pedestrian what the dry plate is to the amateur photographer, a splendid acquisition', wrote *Junior Photographer*, adding that 'The amateur photographer who is also a cyclist may enjoy both hobbies with increased delight'.<sup>111</sup>

Clearly, a walking or cycling body has an agility of movement denied to the motorist who is stationary in relation to the moving vehicle. But while the motorists valued the control over both machine and landscape that motoring seemed to give them, cyclo-photographers experienced the new body-machine combination as an impoverishment. Take, for example, Sturmeys's critique that 'Those who scurry about the country, see very little of it, and quite miss the real charm incident to true touring. Perhaps the most astonishing feature of the lightning tour is the fact that those who make it scarcely ever stop to admire the scenery'.<sup>112</sup> Sturmeys was a vocal supporter of automobilism, but as a photographer and cyclist he understood that the price of motoring was the severing of a more intimate experience of the world, expressed here in the loss of the practice of walking as a visual activity. This indicates, in turn, that the non-motorised photographers' choice of attentively selecting and carefully composing their images was the aesthetic expression of a self-propelled and on-foot movement in communion with the landscape.

Motorists' views were rooted in a profoundly different material and social experience of the world, and this shaped their approach to photography too. This is particularly clear in the early examples of photographs that sought to convey the viewpoint of the motorist by including elements of the vehicle itself within the picture frame. Marc Desportes writes that, following the development of enclosed car

103 – C. W. Hodgson, 'Correspondence', *C.T.C. Monthly Gazette*, March 1903, 151.

104 – See John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2000), 51; Tim Ingold, 'Culture on the Ground. The World Perceived Through the Feet', *Journal of Material Culture*, 9, no. 3 (2004), 315–40; and *Walking Histories: 1800–1950*, edited by Arthur Burns, Chad Bryant and Paul Readman (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

105 – Dominici, 'Cyclo-Photographers'.

106 – Elizabeth Edwards, *The Camera as Historian: Amateur Photographers and Historical Imagination 1885–1918* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012); see page 67 for references to cycling.

107 – Elizabeth Edwards, 'The Amateur Excursion and the Sociable Production of Photographic Knowledge', in *Either/and*, ed. by Pollen and Baillie, (<https://web.archive.org/web/20140921082949/http://eitherand.org/reconsidering-amateur-photography/amateur-excursion-and-sociable-production-photogra/>).

108 – John Taylor, 'Pictorialism', in *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography*, ed. by Hannavy, 1126–31 (1126). Alfred Horsley Hinton (1863–1908), then editor of the *Amateur Photographer*, was a leading advocate of pictorialism.

109 – Amateur photographers' pursuits often included history, antiquarianism and archaeology, which also relied on attentive looking; see, for example, Paul Readman, 'Walking, and Knowing the Past: Antiquaries, Pedestrianism and Historical Practice in Modern Britain', *History*, 107, no. 374 (2022), 51–73.

110 – Carine Cadby, 'Photographic Women on Wheels', *Amateur Photographer*, 24 July 1896, 77. See also Chappell Ryan, 'On the Road with Cycle and Camera', *Amateur Photographer*, 29 May 1902, 431–32.

111 – 'The Application of Photography to Cycling', *Junior Photographer*, 15 June 1896, 317–20 (317).

112 – 'Motor Touring', *Autocar*, 4 July 1903, 1–2 (1).

Figure 11. Photographer unknown, 'A Substantial Camera Stand', *Autocar*, 9 January 1904, 58. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.EW 2-7 [1904].



113 – March Desportes, 'Photomobile Landscapes', in *Autophoto: Cars & Photography, 1900 to Now*, ed. by Xavier Barral and Philippe Séclier (Paris: Fondation Cartier Pour l'Art Contemporain, 2017), 95–100 (98). The practice of photographing from the automobile is also discussed in Graham Smith, *Photography and Travel* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013), 139–47; and David Campany, *The Open Road: Photography and the American Road Trip* (New York: Aperture Foundation, 2014). For the relationship between the motorcar and cinema, see Iain Borden, *Drive Journeys through Film, Cities and Landscapes* (London: Reaktion Books, 2013).

114 – 'Photography and Automobility', 580.

bodies from the 1920s, photographers started including doors and windscreen in their composition 'in an effort to point out the originality of this new window open to the world', thus implicitly acknowledging the automobile's 'interposition in the discovery and perception of the landscape'.<sup>113</sup> This practice started in the early 1900s. As *Motor-Car Journal* observed in 1901, 'Every season thousands of films and plates are exposed from the seats of motor-cars'.<sup>114</sup> Figure 11, the photograph of a motorist taking a photograph while standing on his vehicle, gives us a visual clue of this new fashion. Seeking an elevated viewpoint was a practice adopted by landscape painters and photographers well before the arrival of the automobile, but it was not intrinsic to the composition in the way in which the car frame – and eventually the window frame – became for motor touring. Figures 12 and 13, taken while the automobile was moving, are exemplary of photographs that used this compositional strategy to convey the new experience of accelerated movement. In other instances, however, the vantage point that the motorists enjoyed by virtue of sitting on a vehicle that raised them above the ground was exploited to stage a superiority over the places and people encountered. Consider, for example, figure 14, which shows two photographs taken by R. L. Jefferson during his motor tour of the Balkans in 1905, and figure 15, from Essie Wood's motor tour of Japan in 1907. While this article focuses quite specifically on motor touring in Britain, these examples point to the role played by the automobile in facilitating touring abroad, a practice that would have added further credit to the idea of the motorist as hero. The captions that accompanied these images – 'The men who helped push us through the mud' and 'The inhabitants of a Turkish village who were very interested in the car' in the first example, and in the other 'Our arrival and reception at Morioka' and 'Mountain folk: a study in expression at first sight of a motor-car' – invited readers to see the encounter with local communities as modernity spreading from the perceived centre of progress, Britain, to the peripheries.

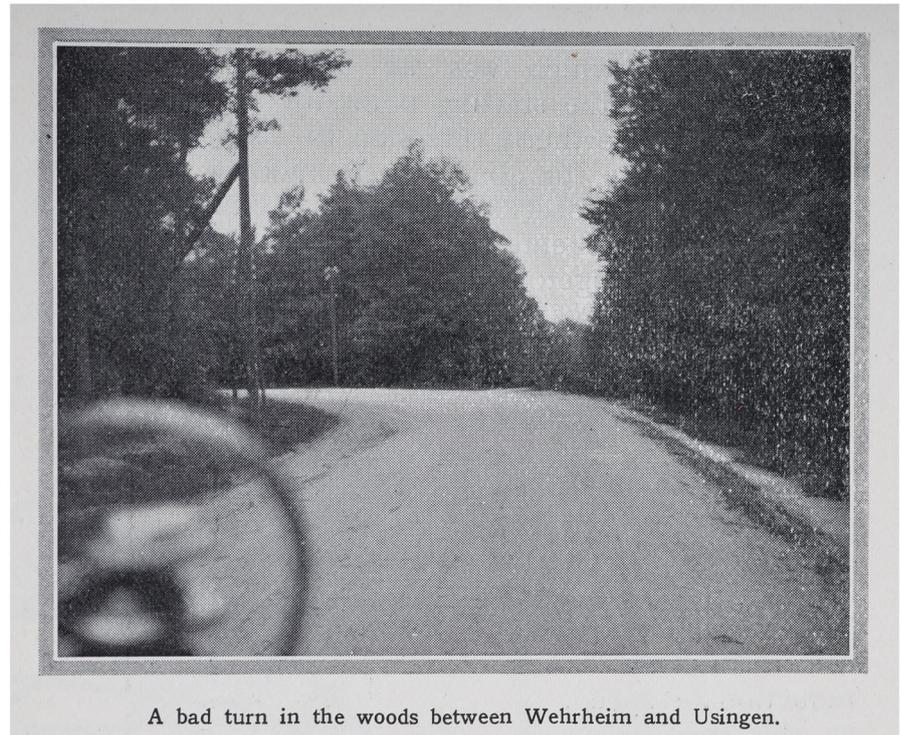
By contrast, to my knowledge there are no photographs in which the cycles that photographers used, often as a tripod too in the case of tricycles and



Figure 12. Photographer unknown, 'A snapshot from the footboard of Mr Higginbotham's 60 h.p. Mercedes at sixty miles an hour', *Autocar*, 23 April 1904, 562. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.EW 2-7 [1904].

quadracycles, were similarly incorporated into the composition. The automobile became instead visible because this technology was no longer experienced as an extension of the self, as was the case with the bicycle, but as something that produced a transformed sense of self: it became the mechanical frame through which people looked at, and thus related to and understood, their world. For the motorists, this was a positive development; they saw themselves as hypermodern subjects and believed that the world was in awe of the mechanical power of the new technology. As the response of those photographers who preferred cycling and walking indicates, however, many rejected the subject position produced by this new mechanically mediated experience of engaging with the world. In a period that for the protagonists of this article was characterised by economic prosperity, the direct benefits of innovations across science, technology, and culture, and a general sense of optimism, the shift in visual epistemology precipitated by the motorcar raised important questions about the role that camera-transport combinations should play in such prosperous society. What people thought they were losing or gaining as a new machine age approached was worked through photography, the media

Figure 13. Photographer unknown, 'A bad turn in the woods between Wehreim and Usingen', *Autocar*, 11 June 1904, 799.  
© British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.EW 2-7 [1904].



technology that *in primis* allowed them to assess how they wanted to live their leisure lives.

#### *Closing Thoughts*

Tim Ingold has influentially argued that 'the reduction of pedestrian experience that has perhaps reached its peak in the present era of the car' is a consequence of the Western-biased association of the feet with nature and the head and hands with civilisation.<sup>115</sup> While, as Ingold shows, we do not perceive things from a single vantage point, but rather by walking around them', the chair – and, as an extension, the car seat – best 'illustrates the value placed upon a sedentary perception of the world, mediated by the allegedly superior senses of vision and hearing, and unimpeded by any haptic or kinaesthetic sensation through the feet'.<sup>116</sup> By ending the seemingly natural association of modern means of transport and photography, the arrival of the automobile brought to the surface this age-old friction over how our knowledge of the world is, or should be, acquired. The comparison with the transport technology that many photographers were intimately familiar with – the bicycle – was central to thinking through and articulating their differences, thus bringing this group to evaluate the world that they had come to know by staying close to the ground, against the one that motoring seemed to offer by lifting people off the ground – both literally and metaphorically. Many within the community of amateur photographers saw walking – and, as an extension, cycling – as a way to maintain a more meaningful engagement with people and places. They believed that the human-centred epistemological foundation of their practices of observing and photographing the world was threatened by a new technology that valued a machine-driven form of living and knowing. For the motoring community, however, the close relationship between body and machine that turned the individual into a bionic being was an exhilarating experience of empowerment, and with their

115 – Ingold, 'Culture on the Ground', 331, 329.

116 – *Ibid.*, 323

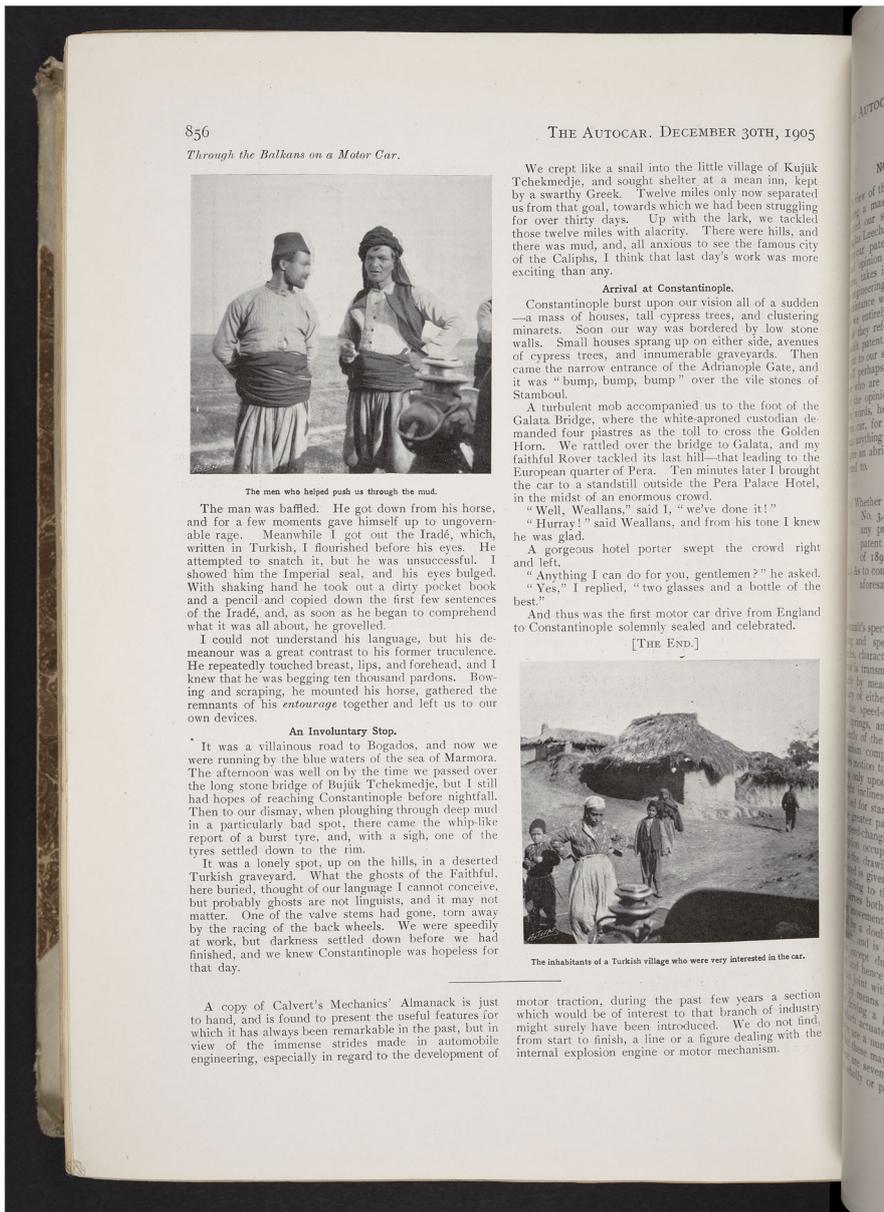
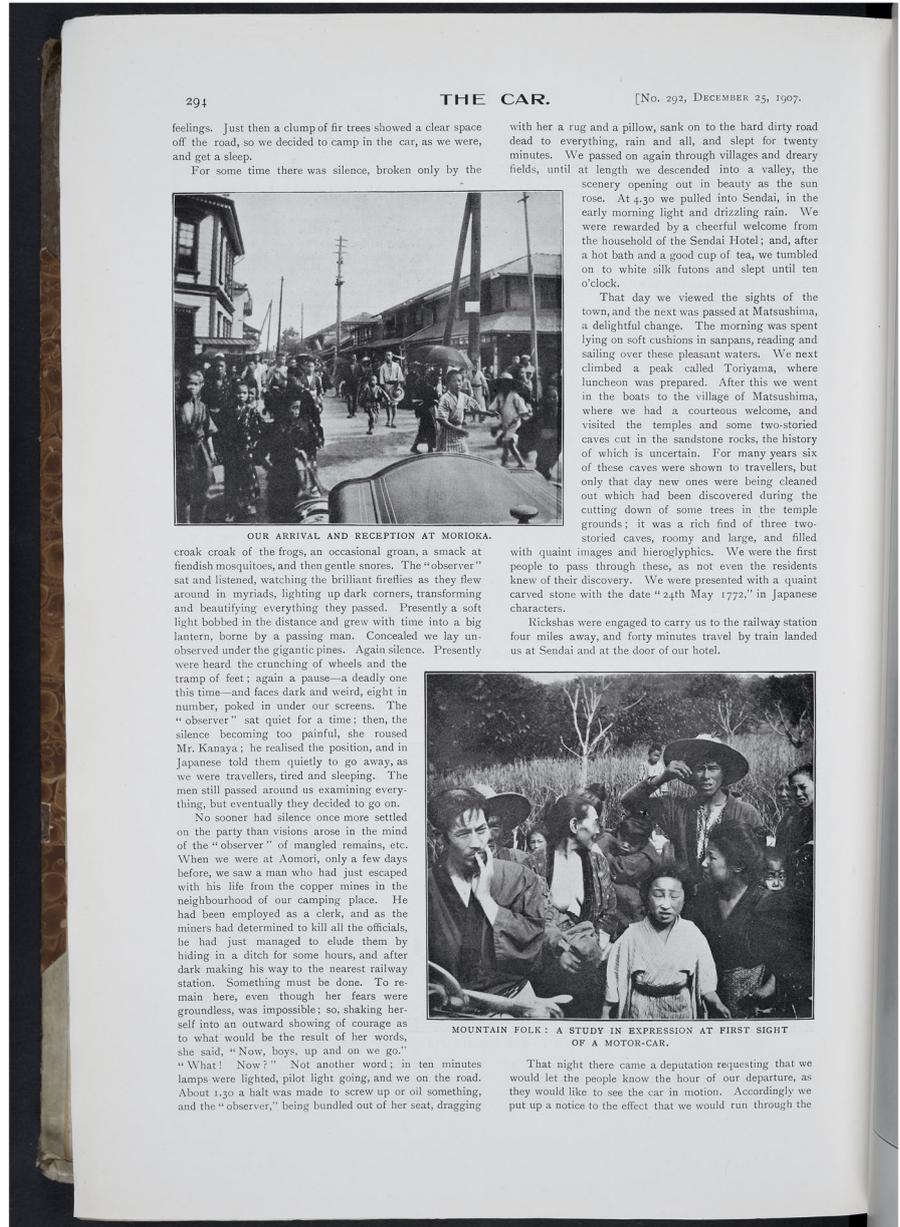


Figure 14. R. L. Jefferson, 'Through the Balkans on a Motor Car', *Autocar*, 30 December 1905, 856. © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.EW 1135-1140 [1905].

photographic camera they sought to celebrate, even if implicitly, this new subject position.

For these photographers, who were on the cusp of diverging ways of seeing, and who produced different interpretations of the affordances and limitations brought about by a new transport technology, this represented a moment of reflection on the role that machines played in one's social and cultural life. Crucially, this means that how different groups within the photographic world responded to the automobile should not be interpreted as the clash between, on the one hand, a conservative group of photographers who rejected modernity because they were concerned with bourgeoisie conformity and, on the other, a progressive faction of camera users whose enthusiastic embrace of the automobile aligned itself with the modernist response to science and technology. As the amateur photographers' widespread use of cycle technology or the initial possibilities that they had imagined for the automobile remind us, this group was indeed also interested in newness and technology, but not at the expense, as they saw it, of shattering one's relation with nature or letting the machine subdue the human body and senses. On

Figure 15. Essie Wood, 'In the Far East: A Motoring Tour in Northern Japan', *Car (Illustrated)*, 25 December 1907, 293–96 (294). © British Library Board. Shelfmark: General Reference Collection LOU.LON 104 [1907].



294

THE CAR.

[No. 292, DECEMBER 25, 1907.]

feelings. Just then a clump of fir trees showed a clear space off the road, so we decided to camp in the car, as we were, and get a sleep.

For some time there was silence, broken only by the



OUR ARRIVAL AND RECEPTION AT MORIOKA.

croak of the frogs, an occasional groan, a smack at fiendish mosquitoes, and then gentle snores. The "observer" sat and listened, watching the brilliant fireflies as they flew around in myriads, lighting up dark corners, transforming and beautifying everything they passed. Presently a soft light bobbed in the distance and grew with time into a big lantern, borne by a passing man. Concealed we lay unobserved under the gigantic pines. Again silence. Presently were heard the crunching of wheels and the tramp of feet; again a pause—a deadly one this time—and faces dark and weird, eight in number, poked in under our screens. The "observer" sat quiet for a time; then, the silence becoming too painful, she roused Mr. Kanaya; he realised the position, and in Japanese told them quietly to go away, as we were travellers, tired and sleeping. The men still passed around us examining everything, but eventually they decided to go on.

No sooner had silence once more settled on the party than visions arose in the mind of the "observer" of mangled remains, etc. When we were at Aomori, only a few days before, we saw a man who had just escaped with his life from the copper mines in the neighbourhood of our camping place. He had been employed as a clerk, and as the miners had determined to kill all the officials, he had just managed to elude them by hiding in a ditch for some hours, and after dark making his way to the nearest railway station. Something must be done. To remain here, even though her fears were groundless, was impossible; so, shaking herself into an outward showing of courage as to what would be the result of her words, she said, "Now, boys, up and on we go."

"What! Now?" Not another word; in ten minutes lamps were lighted, pilot light going, and we on the road. About 1.30 a halt was made to screw up or oil something, and the "observer," being bundled out of her seat, dragging

with her a rug and a pillow, sank on to the hard dirty road dead to everything, rain and all, and slept for twenty minutes. We passed on again through villages and dreary fields, until at length we descended into a valley, the scenery opening out in beauty as the sun rose. At 4.30 we pulled into Sendai, in the early morning light and drizzling rain. We were rewarded by a cheerful welcome from the household of the Sendai Hotel; and, after a hot bath and a good cup of tea, we tumbled on to white silk futons and slept until ten o'clock.

That day we viewed the sights of the town, and the next was passed at Matsushima, a delightful change. The morning was spent lying on soft cushions in sampans, reading and sailing over these pleasant waters. We next climbed a peak called Toriyama, where luncheon was prepared. After this we went in the boats to the village of Matsushima, where we had a courteous welcome, and visited the temples and some two-storied caves cut in the sandstone rocks, the history of which is uncertain. For many years six of these caves were shown to travellers, but only that day new ones were being cleaned out which had been discovered during the cutting down of some trees in the temple grounds; it was a rich find of three two-storied caves, roomy and large, and filled

with quaint images and hieroglyphics. We were the first people to pass through these, as not even the residents knew of their discovery. We were presented with a quaint carved stone with the date "24th May 1772" in Japanese characters.

Rickshaws were engaged to carry us to the railway station four miles away, and forty minutes travel by train landed us at Sendai and at the door of our hotel.



MOUNTAIN FOLK: A STUDY IN EXPRESSION AT FIRST SIGHT OF A MOTOR-CAR.

That night there came a deputation requesting that we would let the people know the hour of our departure, as they would like to see the car in motion. Accordingly we put up a notice to the effect that we would run through the

the motorists' part, the new technology had opened up a new world of possibilities that could not be reached through human power alone and, as such, constituted a gain, and not a loss, in their version of modernity. Photographers' different responses to the motorcar thus represent two different worldviews on what living in the machine age should be like, and as such, they were both projected into the future. Photography, the visual medium and practice that par excellence had transformed how nineteenth-century society could conceptualise its past and imagine its future,<sup>117</sup> was also instrumental in responding to – which some did by embracing and others by rejecting – the world created by the automobile at the turn of the twentieth century.

ORCID

Sara Dominici  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8008-3421>

117 – Edwards, *Camera as Historian*; and Elizabeth Edwards, *Photography and the Practice of History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).