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## **Queue-munity engagement:**

### **Collaborative Event Ethnography at the Antiques Roadshow in Kent.**

By Gavin Weston, Elena Liber, Alexandra Urdea, Helen Cornish, GEARS Collective

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The Antiques Roadshow is a TV programme that has been on TV in the UK since the late 1970's with other iterations produced in the US, Canada, Germany and Sweden among other countries. The format sees members of the public bring in antiques and collectibles for evaluation by experts with each episode filmed at a different location. The programme is hugely popular, not only in terms of viewers, but also in the number of attendees at the individual events.

Thanks to the production team at the Antiques Roadshow, who were excellent hosts, we were given staff parking and managed to get in early and beat the squeeze. But for most people attending the Antiques Roadshow at Ightham Mote in Kent their first queue of the day starts in the narrow country lanes leading to the venue as they wait in their cars to gain access to the car park. Once in, if they have an item they want evaluated – they queue up to find out which expert area (including Glass, Arms and Militia, Books and Jewellery, Miscellanea as possible destinations) best suits their objects. People in this first queue are screened for those who might have notable objects or stories that would be good for filming, while at the end of the queue they are directed towards the proper expertise for evaluation. Once filtered they join the queue for their respective expert or experts, and wait for appraisal of their items, usually, but not always, in long, snaking, lines around the paths and gardens of the Stately Home.

For most attendees, apart from the early risers and those with staff parking credentials, there is a minimum of three queues: car park; object sorting; and evaluation. Or to think of it another way - one queue with two transitions or three distinct parts. Other queues are available on the day, whether it's to buy refreshments in the Women's Institute tent, to purchase National Trust goods at the shop, or to get to the toilet. The queues for each vary in length according to time of day. There is a general sense, in much the same way as it is for tennis at Wimbledon (Chatfield 2018) that queuing is central to the experience of attending the Antiques Roadshow. As their website notes:

“Will I need to queue, and for how long?”

Unfortunately, queues are part and parcel of the Antiques Roadshow thanks to its popularity, but we have a team of stewards and over 30 years' experience to help ensure that your day goes as smoothly as possible.

About 2,000 people attend each Antiques Roadshow valuation day. You'll need to queue for reception, where you will be assigned a ticket to the team you need to see (such as 'books and manuscripts' or 'ceramics and glass'). If you've brought a selection of items, such as a necklace, a doll and a vase, you may need to queue to see different experts. If you are with family/friends, you could split up to see the experts separately.

Wear comfortable shoes, and don't forget your coat and umbrella.” (BBC Antiques Roadshow website accessed 18/6/18)

Each Antiques Roadshow episode is comprised of a series of evaluations of noteworthy objects bought by the public, ones with interesting stories behind them, objects with surprising value or those with a broader social interest. At the same time as it is a TV programme it is also a ‘cultural event’ (Bishop 2001) relying on the public to attend and bring their antiques and collectibles. To make this appealing – they have to put on an excellent day out for those who want to come. Staged in stately homes across the country, the UK version attracts thousands of visitors to each roadshow. The centrality of the process of evaluation and the finite number of experts (and cameras) means that queues are inevitable and therefore an intrinsic part of the experience.

Before starting the research we were forewarned by the production team that queuing was a central part of a day at the Antiques Roadshow but even having built this into our research methodology the richness of the queue(s) as a research space and research topic was still surprising. In short, our method involved a group of 21 researchers (including with 5 lecturers, 3 PhD students, 4 MA students, and 9 BA students) arriving at a filming of *Antiques Roadshow* in Ightham Mote, Kent, on the 16<sup>th</sup> of June 2016 to conduct a Collaborative Event Ethnography (Brosius & Campbell 2010; Weston, Djohari & Gears Collective 2018). The research was a student designed, staff led experiment with Collaborative Event Ethnography as a new form of research led teaching and/or teaching led research. Following a call by Gavin Weston for willing participants around 40 staff and students turned up for an initial brainstorming session to establish what to research.<sup>1</sup> Shaped by pragmatics and general interests:

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<sup>1</sup> The Goldsmiths Ethnography of the Antiques Road Show (GEARS) Collective are a team of researchers including students and staff. The collective consists of (in alphabetic order by first name) Alexandra Urdea, Aliche Bridget, Angie Yensuang, Claire Calvagna, Cy Elliott Smith, Elena Liber, Emily Fenna Caldwell, Faye Lench, Gavin Weston, Helen Cornish, Henrike Neuhaus, Katie Burton, Lowri Evans, Lucia Saiz Corsin, Marla Greenway, Martin Webb, Natalie Djohari, Nicholas Montebello, Olly Bellamy, Robbie Wojciechowski, Will Cundill, William Tantam. We

“suggestions included Comicon, Lambeth County Fair, Lewisham People’s Day, Vapour Lover UK, Woolwich Carnival, Mind/Body/Spirit wellbeing festivals, Marxism 2016, the V&A Museum of Childhood’s Oliver Postgate exhibit, Toilet Tours, Premier Dart League, Holi and a lost luggage auction.” (Weston, Djohari & GEARS Collective 2018: 3)

The group then discussed the pragmatics of each potential site – discussing timing, access, possible research questions, costs, travel and other issues that would act as impediments, benefits or reasons to veto. Once thoroughly discussed and Googled for practicalities we had a shortlisting vote followed by a final vote, with the Antiques Roadshow coming out as a clear and popular winner.

The idea behind the research, discussed in more detail in another paper (Weston & Djohari 2018) was to use Collaborative Event Ethnography, a method developed by Brosius and Campbell (2010), as an experiment in teaching/learning research skills while also opening up new ethnographic possibilities regarding capturing short term, large scale events in a more expansive way, open to a multiplicity of perspectives. On the day we had 21 researchers, all engaged in one unified piece of research. We decided to focus on three main parts – a general ethnographic snapshot of the event itself, following the objects and the people who bought them with an eye to the idea of value within the process, and a third focus on the queues that were central to the event. We were open to any other interesting topics and themes that might emerge – but these were our preconceived focal points. To cover these angles we divided the event up into general and particular tasks. Some members of the group brought in objects for evaluation, so they could experience the process from within, others interviewed people before and after evaluations, others zone-marked or roamed freely writing detailed thick description and interviewing the public, crew, and event staff, and even the occasional member of the cast. This broad approach meant that our experience as a group was profoundly different to that of a lone ethnographer.

On queues, our multiple participant perspectives captured over 100 interviews spanning from brief informal chats to semi-structured interviews across experts, production staff, National Trust workers and the public. As a pedagogical tool – it was an unqualified success, both staff and students had fun while learning and doing research. As a research method – the findings were equally positive but slightly more bewildering. Regarding queues alone, funnelling such multiplicity into one space

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should like to thank the members of the Antiques Roadshow team, who were immensely helpful throughout. We should like to give special thanks to (Executive Producer) Simon Shaw and Rebecca Viale (production coordinator) for all their help before and during the research. This research was funded by Goldsmiths Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (TaLIC) and we should like to give special thanks to Donovan Synmoie of TaLiC for his support throughout the research and in our continuing endeavours to take student/staff collaborative research further.

creates curious questions. If a group of researchers, spanning across professional anthropologists, PhD's, MA's and undergraduate students can capture such multiplicity in a queue what does this tell us about queues and what does it tell us about anthropology? As an approximate answer to these questions and shaping what follows we start with the statement that the queue is an embodied reality, a systematised structure established through rules, although many of these will have work-arounds, it is an inclusive and exclusive social space, externally managed, yet can act spontaneously. The queue is many things to many people and often simultaneously.

### **The lone ethnographer and the queue/anthropologist multiple**

The teaching and writing of anthropology has, at almost all levels, portrayed the practice of ethnography as a lone, even lonely (Levi-Strauss 2011[1955]), pursuit. As a discipline, social or cultural anthropology is the domain where authors can get away with the first person pronoun 'I' most readily. Whether this takes the form of an old-timey heroic entrance to a village setting, a reflexive recognition of ones limitations, a thought from the field, or an attribution of your own role in a conversation – for socio-cultural anthropologists the ego-centric world is fundamental to how we think and write anthropologically. As anthropologists, those of us involved in this project have no real objection to this, it is a source of insight and leads to forms of writing we love and embrace.

But... what if this is not always the best way to capture the object of our study? What if there are certain moments where a single or singular perspective misses the multiplicity and diversity that is inherent to the very nature of the social context at hand. Collaborative Event Ethnography allowed us to invert the normal model of one anthropologist in the field over a long duration, to become many anthropologists spending one day conducting ethnographic research – in an acknowledgment of the time constraints and scale of the job at hand. Collaborative Event Ethnography (CEE) was developed by Brosius (anthropologist) and Campbell (marine scientist) as a distinct solution to a very particular problem – namely “the increased use of international meetings and agreements to establish the goals, targets, and means of achieving conservation” (2010: 245). As conservation policy and practice are increasingly driven by sprawling conferences with various forums, members assemblies, panels and evenings consisting of “many receptions, book launches, and other informal events” (2010: 248). CEE is an elegant solution to capturing expansive, compartmentalized, short term events. They took a team of 22 researchers to the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona to explore how such conferences

achieved the influence they did, covering different parts of the conference with a large team of anthropologists and social geographers.

Our own project was more playful and served as a pilot to explore the potential for student/staff collaborative research and to consider how critical academic research aimed towards publication might be used to train students in anthropological research methods. Our team of 21 researchers allowed us to explore the Antiques Roadshow from 21 overlapping perspectives. Initial reflections towards analysis were navigated from the outset as we compared experiences and conversations, and shared ideas and off-the-cuff explanations. The research team came from three continents and nine nationalities with ages ranging from our teens to our fifties. While we shared interests in anthropology and Goldsmiths we diverged in many other respects. While we were unified by our research, we were multiple in our perspectives.

In *The Body Multiple* (2002) Annemarie Mol draws upon research on the diagnosis and treatment of atherosclerosis (plaque build-up in arteries) in a Dutch hospital. She makes the case that through discussion, diagnosis, measurement, observation and treatment the disease is shown to exist in multiple forms in the same patient, but that it is rendered coherent and singular through contrasting processes of bureaucracy, imaging and conversation. Her philosophical argument is that “Ontology is not given in the order of things, but that, instead *ontologies* are brought into being sustained, or allowed to wither away in common day sociomaterial practices” (Mol 2002: 6). What at times is an argument for medicine constructing a multiplicity of bodies at other times returns to the fact that this multiplicity is martialled into coherence through medical necessity. There is a body multiple, but there is also a singular body at a nexus of social and material relations.

For us, likewise the queue is simultaneously singular and multiple. It could be argued that there is one queue with distinct parts, or several separate queues, or manifold queues each best appreciated from a subjective position of a queuer, queue organiser or queue observer. Which one you choose to foreground is a matter of coherence and subjectivity. As researchers we were manifold and Collaborative Event Ethnography provided an opportunity to explore and represent multiplicity in a singular way while also allowing for the opposite by unpicking a singular interpretation through our multiplicity. We have tried to maintain some of this diversity by including direct quotations from the field notes where possible to maintain a sense of plurality in the authorship. What follows is a distillation of how we captured and understood the queue(s) encountered.

### **The Britishness of queuing**

As many of our researchers noted in one way or another: “People were making comments about how “British” this situation was.” (Martin field notes). Overall the day was remarkable for its near pastiche of British cultural touchstones; held at a National Trust site, where it rained, with catering by the Women’s Institute, being filmed by the BBC. The day also saw a football match between England and Wales at the UEFA European Championship, which led to a more nuanced discussion of Englishness versus Britishness among the gathered crowds. Later in the day it would be announced that the MP Jo Cox was murdered by a white supremacist nationalist assailant shouting ‘Britain first’ and the event also fell exactly a week before the Brexit referendum. To say that questions about what it meant to be British were in the air is an understatement but nearly everyone considered that queues are ‘very British’. As queuers noted “(Laughing) Yes, queuing is a very British thing; we queue everywhere, for everything” (Lucia fieldnotes) “the British are very good at queuing aren’t we!” (Natalie Fieldnotes).

General conversation between queuers was widespread, between people who recognised each other as locals as well as total strangers (which is not always the case in British queues), there was a banter-ish sub-stream, a good humoured teasing, which was particularly notable between British and non-British visitors:

“[daughter with mother in queue said] her husband is American and he had laughed at them for coming along. He had mocked them for their English habits of queuing and buying/selling second hand stuff. I asked someone before if they [would be] queuing, they replied by saying that ‘that’s what the British do’” (Martin field notes).

“As we waited the gentleman noted that in Australia all this queuing would never happen and that “all this queuing was very un-Australian.” (Will C field notes)

While much of this discussion was relatively circular it allowed for an easy entry point to conversation, ‘queuing’, along with the weather and the Antiques Roadshow, was a mainstay of queue ‘banter’ throughout the day.

Queues are of course not uniquely British, it’s even possible to argue that they are not even uniquely human (Alberts et al 2003; Herrnkind 1969). Queuing is in one sense just a way of ordering transactions and it exists with diverse weights of cultural baggage in many contexts. As Bogdanov notes of the Soviet Union:

“The queue was a constant and immediately recognisable attribute of Soviet everyday life. In ideological terms, it signified the ‘temporary’ hardships the country was facing. For those having to queue, it was an inescapable quotidian ritual, a waste of time, and a source of irritation” (Bogdanov 2014: 77)

Such was the centrality of the queue to the experience of the centralisation of resource allocation that it became shorthand for hardship. Boris Yeltsin invoked images of queues in his campaign for re-election in 1996:

"how quickly we have forgotten the huge queues for bread, sugar and other foods in 1991! People queued from the evening through the night and lit bonfires to keep warm. The system which some today are still hankering after had completely exhausted itself. . . . Our children and grandchildren will not know what shortages, ration cards and graft are. They don't know about hours-long queues, but does everyone have the opportunity to buy the goods they need?"  
(Yeltsin February 16<sup>th</sup> 1996 quoted in Janack 1999:40).

As is very clear from Yeltsin's deployment of queues as shorthand for unwanted hardship, queues are neither uniquely British nor inherently evocative of nostalgia.

In the UK, the time in living memory during which queues were similarly linked with hardship was through rationing during and after the Second World War. Yet rather than looking back on this as a source of querulousness or disharmony it became associated with the internalization of something more virtuous:

"what really shaped Britain's reputation as civilised queuers was World War II. "Propaganda at the time was all about doing your duty and taking your turn," says [Dr Kate] Bradley. "It was a way the government tried to control a situation in uncertain times. "The queue became loaded with meaning, drawing on notions of decency, fair play and democracy and the myth of the British as patient queuers was forged, says [Professor Joe] Moran. (BBC News Online 4/7/2013)

Such a view of queuing was, of course, a very blinkered form of social memory, the preoccupation with moral virtue acquired through queuing ignores lack of choice and the extent to which it propagated discontent:

"A Mass Observation Survey of September 1948 reported that there was 'no other current topic that arouses such immediate and fierce reaction ... as the subject of queues ... which clearly to many is the symbol of all the frustrations of this post war era'." (Moran 2005: 287)

In 1950 Churchill "used the term 'Queuetopia' to describe a Britain under Socialist rule" (Moran 2005: 287) and the continued presence of queues was understood to have been a key factor in Labour losing the election in 1951. The British people, like the Soviets, had had enough of queuing.

The fact that there is a rose-tinted view of the British historical relationship with queuing is of less importance than the utility of the idea. It allows us to generate value in lost time and ground it in a



sense of commonality, as was evident at Ightham Mote Antiques Roadshow. As Bridget, one of our team from Nigeria, observed:

“Queuing takes some physical and mental effort but also creates the fellow feeling that helps the day go by and become an event. It allows people to be stoic and, in the case of people around me, reference their national identity.” (Bridget field notes)

The queue allowing ‘people to be stoic’ has echoes of sitting in *seiza* as a form of self-discipline in Japan (Kondo 1987: 253). Although, it should be noted that if it is a source of self-discipline, it does have its limits. One person gave up on the queue saying: “[we] don’t want to miss the football this afternoon. With England... no one ever knows, they should win, but... it’s England...” (*whose fieldnotes are these?*) For others, one queue was more than enough for the day (“John wasn't bothered about queuing up again” Cy field notes). There was talk about the British capacity to stick with a queue in the rain, even as some people gave up, and talk of the peculiar Britishness of queues, while standing next to immigrants and tourists from overseas. For every observed tendency there was an evident discrepancy. The queue contained its own contradictions.

Stoicism aside, the ability or desire to queue for any length of time is relative. While there was widespread conversation of queuing being ‘very British’ there was also talk of boredom or even anger about queuing. When viewing the queue from multiple perspectives it is tempting to see this as a sort of hypocrisy – but such a representation would be flattening – parts of the queue were variously content and discontent. Statements about queuing and national identity were largely deployed socially, even when to foreigners who by logic were not part of this and therefore considered inferior queuers. It was used as a way of starting conversations, saying ‘grin and bear it’ to reduce levels of complaint and to establish a sense of camaraderie. The side-effect of exclusion was generally papered over with humour.

The aspect of queuing where there was least humour deployed was in regards to the sense of fairness. Even though there are strategies and tactics employed to survive the queue and optimise the queuing time and comfort, there were no incidents of actual queue jumping: no matter how old or pregnant someone was, no one could be absolved, though, of course, anyone could simply drop out.

### **Strategies/tactics in the queue**

The British public love a news story about queuing. A recent wave of press attention followed the announcement of a study by Adrian Furnham which led to much discussion in the press (*The Telegraph* 16/2/2017; *BBC News* 16/2/2017; *The Times* 16/2/2017; *Mail Online* 16/2/2017; *The Mirror* 16/2/2017) about a so called ‘rule of 6’, where an individual is disinclined to queue behind more than six

people, or for more than six minutes. The study, funded by Privilege Home Insurance seems still not to be in print a year later, so the exact details are somewhat lost, although some clarification came from Professor Furnham (Benedictus in *The Guardian* 19/2/2018) in the immediate aftermath of the press frenzy. Furnham made it clear that it's much more relative than initial stories implied: it depends what you are queuing for; how much you want or need it; how many people are behind you in the queue; and whether you have something to distract you.

Indeed preparedness played a large part in people's experience of the queue. Some who were well versed in Antiques Roadshow queue culture brought chairs: "Two of the three in a group behind me have collapsible deck chairs. After a while one leaves for [the] loo – [the] other takes their chair" (Gavin field notes). A certain amount of chair-envy existed – which led some to improvise: "the whole queue was moving so slowly that the majority of people had grabbed the chairs that were scattered around and had sat down" (Martin field notes). Without chairs the prolonged standing could be physically testing. As one person asked "The queuing is painful. So you've come down to do a research on how nutty we are?" (? Field notes). For many the pragmatics of sitting and standing were not out of choice but out of necessity:

"[Lady in 70's sitting in appointment zone] She was not reluctant to talk to us, but mentioned at the start that she was sitting because she couldn't stand for long periods of time, and would need to keep an eye on the progress her husband and son made in the queue so that she could join them when they got towards the front." (Lowri and Henrike interview)

"She said it was very slow, annoying and stressful because she has a chronic back and knee pain." (Bridget field notes)

"A woman behind us, in her 80s I would guess, had a fold up stool hired from the National Trust shop so that she could sit when the queue wasn't moving." (Martin field notes)

It is useful to draw on De Certeau's (2011[1984]) distinctions between strategies and tactics to explore pre-planned and improvisational approaches to queuing, despite his focus on political resistance and use of military vocabulary. While strategies are readily generalisable plans that anticipate expected 'proper' environs, tactics are adaptive and improvisational but might still be drawn from a pre-established repertoire. In queues a strategy, bringing a chair, is what you anticipate and prepare for; a tactic is established in situ, 'borrowing' nearby chairs. Bringing a game to play in the queue with children would be a strategy, playing 'I spy' would be a tactic. Some noted this for future strategising "I might have to bring in my chair and umbrellas next time so it can be like an afternoon in the park" (Bridget field notes). Most had anticipated queues, but as only seasoned attenders and the well-researched expected such

lengths or had a sense of the time involved, most queue-based behaviour combined strategy and tactic, preparation and improvisation. While for some this concerns comfort or entertainment, for others it is a matter of necessity.

Queuing is always experienced through the prism of the body and not all bodies are equally disposed to queuing. The website addresses this:

“What if I cannot stand for a long period of time?”

We want to ensure that you have the best possible experience, so if you need any assistance or a chair please inform a steward” (BBC Antiques Roadshow website accessed 18/6/2018).

One of our researchers, Alex, was heavily pregnant and also happened to have bought an item (a Romanian folk dress) that saw her channelled into the ‘Miscellaneous’ queue. This was by far the longest queue and glacial in its progress, it was notable as the queue with most vocal exasperation. As a group we had failed to strategise on behalf of Alex and had not thought to bring a chair. As it slowly dawned on us how long Alex had been standing we adopted the ubiquitous tactic of swapping in and out. This was not an isolated incident other team members also stepped in and out of queues using proxies:

“The queue isn’t that long, mostly at this time at least, it is populated by women, either in pairs or by themselves. KB goes to sit nearby and make some notes while I hold our place in the queue. (Lowri field notes)

We were not alone, everyone was doing it (“Are you taking turns queuing?” Queuer: “He’s going to look around a bit” Alex field notes). It also turned out to be a fringe benefit of all the sociability going on in the queue. So while time in the “queue is largely spent talking to people, swapping stories with neighbours – there is an interest in each other’s objects” (Robbie field notes). Newfound friends could be called upon as sociality became a tactic as the queues slowly progressed:

“I don’t know exactly how it came up, but the 3rd lady arriving turned the discussions to how they all knew each other. I assumed that they were friends but it turns out they had only met at the roadshow. Nothing about the way they acted suggested to me they were virtual strangers. Yet they had developed a ‘pseudo’ friendship for the length of the queue. A good tactic if you are there on your own and need the loo or are bored?” (Lowri field notes)

This simple tactic allowing for a stretch of the legs, a breather, or a toilet break also allowed for the gathering of additional information about the status of the queue:

“A man standing behind me strolls out of the queue and to the front, he comes back and I hear him tell his partner that there is only one expert at the jewellery table (we haven’t moved

forward for 10 minutes at this point). There is general speculation between them about why – lunch? Off filming somewhere maybe?”

The ability to adopt an appropriate strategy or to refine ones tactics was dependent on good queue-based information. What time of day you join the queue hugely effects your waiting time:

“I did not have to join the main queue at this stage in the day, I was able to walk straight up to the Poda for the initial assessment. I was directed to the jewellery queue with a card that says “All will be revealed”. A lady in the jewellery queue told me it makes sense to come later on as you don’t have to queue for very long, but people don’t seem to think of doing this” (Martin field notes)

Just because helpful queue-related advice was shared did not necessarily mean it would be used.

The fact that Miscellanea attracts the longest lines meant getting into the line early was the best move for those with multiple items, whereas shorter queues for other experts would remain short all day long (one disgruntled queuer commented: “Had I known, I would have gone to miscellanea first thing this morning... I thought I’d do the short ones first” XXXXX field notes). It slowly dawned on one of our queuers that a woman ahead of them who kept leaving and then returning was holding places in two queues simultaneously. Planning ahead meant that it was possible to be in two queues at once, and see both items valued with two proxies. While there was a general sense of right and wrong queuing, this was all internalised and there were no strong disagreements at all that day. These strategic decisions were seen as acceptable and were tacitly sanctioned by the rest of the queuers. The only people who were identified as stretching the limits of patience were those who produced extra items once they got to the expert:

Two women standing in front of me in the queue are discussing the slowness with which we are moving forward. One (curly hair) goes to investigate, and returns to report to the other that one person seems to have brought with them many items. They both agreed this was not acceptable. (Lowri field notes)

[Commenting on a lady who brought too much jewellery to be valued] ‘Can’t people see that it’s not fair?’ Alex field notes).

Even then, while this effected the queue it was not entirely a queuing issue.

Retrospective judgments as to whether the queue was worthwhile were based on the length of the queue they had been in as well as the appraisal of quality of the discussion of their object with the expert as well as its estimated value (discussed in more detail in another paper Cornish, Urdea, Liber, Weston, Evans et al XXXX). Occasionally people would grumble, and speculate on changes that might be

made to get things moving faster. Into the afternoon, after the football match had thinned some of the queues a little, one visitor interjected “it is silly that there are some experts sat with nothing to do while that queue was so long” (XXXX field notes). “She really hoped that they had something interesting to say about the statues or it would all be a waste. We chatted for a while about passing the time” (Helen field notes). But such grumbles were limited and people who moaned too much tended to kill conversations and leave themselves stranded in isolation in the queue.

However well one strategized and adapted strategies to minimise queuing it was accepted that some queuing was inevitable. The ‘rule of 6’ was incompatible with the nature of the day. In 2016, much the same as in 2018, the convention ordinarily would be to use your mobile phone as a source of distraction. But Ightham Mote, lovely in every other way, is a mobile network dead zone.

“Virtually no mobile phone signal (phone/4g/3g all down apart from sporadic glimpses). Despite this people are still checking their phones often in queue (often followed by raising it into the sky in search of a signal) but due to this not working very well most then put their phones back in their pockets unlike most queues in 2016. Despite the phone checks the absence of people who are deeply focused on their phone as a method of self-distraction [is noteworthy]” (Gavin field notes).

Mild expletives could be heard throughout the event as people checked the strength of their signals. Some of the analogue people in the digital world, and maybe some locals with prior telecommunication knowledge of the area, bought books (“I think it would have been boring if I had not decided to keep busy and pass time with a novel” XXXXX field notes). Generally, conversations between friends, family (“I came with my husband who I can talk to pass time” Bridget notes) and strangers provided the main source of distraction.

We weren’t the only people who were people watching, various visitors specifically discussed this as part of the pleasure of the event, and many other who didn’t shared stories about people they had met in other queues and things they had seen. While gossip is differentiated from rumour by its intimacy (Gluckman 1963), an easy ad hoc intimacy was part of the event. A sense of queue-munity – the warm yet fleeting temporary friendships of the queue - were simultaneously meaningful in the moment and temporary enough to walk away from:

“Middle aged woman with large painting: ‘I met a new friend here today’ (pointing to another middle aged woman), who also came with a small size painting” (Bridget field notes)

“As we reached the end of the queue, as with the earlier queue for reception, the relationships formed in the queue seemed to suddenly dissolve. As we were called over the people in the queue seemed to revert to being individual strangers” (Martin field notes).

### **Queue Management & Curating**

As a member of the production staff pointed out, queues are important at the Antiques Roadshow, not just because the visitors make the event by bringing the items – but they are used as the backdrop for filming. Due to this the queues are not stationary. As the sun moves the cameras move. As the cameras move the queues are redirected to keep them in the background of filming. There is a lot of queue management that goes on throughout the day. This involves production staff, security guards and stewards working together to keep everything in order.

For production staff the size of the queues also acted as a barometer of how well the day might go. As a producer told us at the beginning of the day “By time event began today she already saw a few hundred in the queue. If the queue is already building before event it’s a good sign. If she sees a queue at 8am then promotion has probably worked” (Gavin - field notes). At the front of the queue, by 7:30am when we arrived, there were people who had arrived very early in the morning, having travelled from other parts of Kent or England to attend. This was before the event had officially opened so the queue was held at the entrance to the lawn, until the event opened and the real queuing for the reception desk could begin.

At the front of the initial queue was a stall with a weapons expert. His job was to assess any weapons that were being brought to the Antiques Roadshow to ensure that they were deactivated and safe to be brought into the event. Each item that was deemed safe would have a red tag attached to it with string to confirm it had passed his inspection. There had been a number of times where attendees had brought an item that was not safe, such as a German gun that someone’s father had brought home from the war. In cases such as those he would tell the visitor to leave and take the item straight to the police station. This is another strategic aspect of queue and event management to ensure that the event runs smoothly, efficiently and safely. The weapons expert had a very performative way of engaging with the visitors. He walked up and down the queue waving his tags and calling for those who had brought weapons to identify themselves so he could assess them (Elena field notes). While doing this he engaged in friendly, good natured conversations and listened to the stories that accompanied the objects with interest. This not only allowed him to efficiently see as many objects as possible in the time that he had,

but it also gave the visitors a taste of their first engagement with an expert. While he did not place a value on their items, his level of interest could be seen as an indicator of how their object might be received by the official expert. The location of the weapons expert at the entrance to the lawn area also acted as a filter to slow the flow of the queue into the main area where the visitors would be directed by stewards to which queue they needed to join, the location of the bathrooms or where they could get refreshments. As such, stewardship could be seen to extend beyond the boater-hatted stewards to include the weapons expert and security guards.

A security guard watches from up high in the Pagoda, the Antiques Roadshow's travelling panopticon-like hub, keeping an eye on the movement of crowds:

"you are up high you can see the "congestions", where there queues are stopping. This is he said like running local carnivals, it's about crowd movement. He explained that he has been part of the group organising his local community carnival and that was where he had learnt about queues. He explains you have to keep queues moving, hence looking from high up. It's best to have curved queues he explains so that people can walk past. You need to always have a view of the footpaths so that they can be kept clear. Queues therefore need to snake around and if you have a wall you keep them to the wall" (Emily field notes).

One security guard noted "'[It's] very polite here. Not like other places', but He Knows How to Manage Queues and Crowds!" (Helen field notes, emphasis in notes).

The queue as an externally managed object sets the social life within the queue and the infrastructural management of it as two separate distinct realities, although they overlap in many ways, particularly through conversations that emerge between the organisers and the organised. For one visitor this was a distinct part of the event:

Natalie: So what makes a really good queue and what makes a really bad queue?

Female queuer: I think it's having plenty of stewards to chat to, saying you're nearly there, and there's a little place, an implement and you had to guess what it was, You know, keeps you entertained... I went for tongue clamp, my friend went for skirt lifter [*everyone laughs at this*] but I don't know what the answer is, but little things like that keep you entertained (Natalie field notes).

With the Mystery Object challenge a visitor is invited to guess the function of an obscure object with the correct answer and historical account featuring in the broadcast programme. On the day of the roadshow it works as a strategy to keep visitors entertained and is just one example of the ways in which the stewards at the event engage in friendly conversation with the visitors and suggest ways to

pass the time. There are dozens of stewards scattered all over the site, highly visible in straw boater hats and red sashes. They have multiple roles in the management of the event and queues specifically. They guide and help organise while also giving tips to visitors on how best to plan their queuing activity. The multiplicity of the role of the stewards is essential to ensuring that the event runs smoothly. While experts offer temporary exchanges that are more specifically focused on the objects and their variety of values (such as financial, historical, or sentimental), the stewards' multiple roles allow for a different kind of engagement that is more focused on the experience of the Antiques Roadshow as an event at a specific site, rather than purely on the object. The good natured exchanges and guidance is integral to keeping the event moving, making sure people feel well cared for, and making the queue feel like a social space. A steward might direct you to which queue you need to join, but they might accompany that with an 'insider tip' on which queue is best to join first if you are looking to have multiple objects evaluated.

The multiplicity of stewards roles can be expanded from the active duties of stewardship to the curated figure of the stewards themselves. The uniform, consisting of a straw boater hat with a red ribbon and bright red sash both bearing the label 'Steward', is akin to wearing a hi-vis vest, inasmuch as it deliberately increases their visibility and emphasises the steward-visitor ratio. If this was the only purpose then why not just wear hi-vis? Why the very specific straw boaters and sashes? This particular choice echoes the issue of visible Britishness. The evident Britishness of the event was not only achieved through queuing (as discussed earlier), but also through the careful curation of the Antiques Roadshow and more specifically at the Antiques Roadshow at Ightham Mote. The setting in the grounds of a medieval moated manor house, the carefully manicured lawn, the tea tent supplied and run by the Women's Institute, the deck chairs, and the uniforms of the stewards. This uniform is not ubiquitous across all Antiques Roadshows internationally, for example in America the stewards wear polo shirts and lanyards. In Britain the straw boater evokes images of boy's public school uniforms, Dick van Dyke in *Mary Poppins*, P.G. Wodehouse's Bertie Wooster and semi-formal summer attire at early 20th century English garden parties. These different aspects feed into sense of nostalgic 'Britishness' that is present at the Antiques Roadshow. This sense of 'Britishness' is intertwined with memories of the second World War and post-war era, epitomised by defining notions such as 'Make Do and Mend' and 'Keep Calm and Carry On' that have become such pervasive markers of this period. While the focus of the show is to discuss objects of historic or aesthetic value, the event itself cultivates an evocative image of the past that resonates with many visitors' ideas about Britain and 'Britishness', and the uniform of the stewards is significant in the creation of this image and this experience. It also downplayed the sense of being



externally organised, but encouraged a sense of visitor experience that evoked being a guest of the stately home, offered help by domestic, rather than security, staff. Stewards are simultaneously part of the organisational management of the queue, key players in establishing a sense of queue-munity, while also signifying through their costume the nostalgia and Britishness that are at the heart of the event. The performance in all three regards was crucial to people's sense of how the day went.

### **Beyond the queue: watching and waiting**

Even for an anthropologist, standing in a queue for almost the entire day feels like missing out on something else. While the majority of the Antique Roadshow attendees can be found queuing at any given time, other forms of aggregation found throughout the event are crowds, usually gathered around expert tables. And more often than not it is crowds rather than queues that feature most prominently in the broadcast programme. The gathered crowds exclamatory 'Ooohs' and 'Aaahs' of surprise upon the valuation of the items are as much a part of the show as the experts and theme music.

We found one space where the line between the queue and crowd became particularly blurred. So far the queues discussed have been linear, with the experts discussing items presented by each visitor as they reach the top of the line one by one: but one queue was a little more amorphous. Andy McConnell, the show's resident glassware expert ran things a little differently. There was still a queue to have items appraised, but he would gather a large array of items from a number of people and place on his table together and would talk about them one item after the next but to the crowd more than to the bearer of the object. As each member of our team went past and observed this outlier we were each inspired to take field notes such as these:

"At the glass table – the crowd is 3 or 4 persons deep around the table with a large red umbrella as the expert stands and discusses how children in the 1970's mined old Victorian bottles from a Victorian rubbish pit, digging tunnels through the 70+ year old rubbish. He is a good raconteur, which is why the crowd is so large. People, once they reach the head of the queue, which is less organised here than at the other expert's tables, freely walk up and place their glassware on any available space – it is crowded with an assortment of glass jars, vases, ornaments, decanters, cups, plates etc. The expert, once he is done with one person's item or items the calls out the crowd, 'what do you want to see next?' The crowd shout or point at the item they want to see explained or appraised next, in this case a woman picks up a vase and pushes it into his hands. It is pressed industrial glass, he exclaims, even though it may be very old, in this case 19th century, because of its manufacture it is not valuable, maybe a tenner? He then picks up some

old thick 19th century glass cups and says these are valuable if you looking to drink without spilling, going on to emphasise their use value rather than any paltry monetary one. It is an education in not only glassware – the making and use of – but also of the politics of the past. One of the sets – a crystal decanter and glasses where the crystal is formed in a curtain of beads around the outside would have been the 'top', the expert explains, 'the very highest level in the world when it was made in the late 19th century' 'great industrialist would have drunk from this sort of thing in New York' [it was American] 'balls would have been given with maybe a tens of these things being used to decant and pour champagne whilst the poor and everyday drank out of these sorts of things' holding up a pressed glassed cup. Next he picks on a glass fish, cuddling it to his chest and stroking it, 'it's not worth anything, next to nothing but its Italian made, they're still being made today but represents the aspirations of the working class moving into the middle classes in the 1960s/70's.'" (XXXXX Cy? Field notes)

Throughout this interaction the crowd watching and the queue of those having their objects evaluated are less easily distinguished. As queuers with glassware approach the table stewards provide instructions about what to do with their items and what to expect. While everyone had been conditioned, both within the event and from a life of queuing, to expect certain things from a queue, they readily engaged with the reframed interaction, rather than expressing disappointment. While many crowds shift with the cameras to see what is important enough to be filmed, a crowd remains a constant presence at Andy's table as they come to appreciate a more delta-like and performative end to the queue.

A second space in which the linear nature of the queue broke down was around the appointments area. If, while queueing or at the first pre-queue appraisal an item was singled out early for filming its owner would be taken to a seated holding area and asked to wait to be filmed. This was not necessarily based on first come, first served principles as the availability of cameras and appropriate experts had to be factored in, so waiting was less structured than with the queue. If the production team were made aware of a noteworthy item even before the day of filming the entire process of queuing might be bypassed completely.

"[In car park] 13:20 - I see a man changing into a dress shirt. [What an unusual way to use the parking lot I thought]. After it appeared he had finished changing I approached him and his wife. They had travelled to the UK from Sydney, Australia, and were hoping to have their William Cowper books evaluated. They only had a picture of the books but had written to Antiques Road Show and had been given a pass from the producer that would help them jump the queue. They

were also huge fans of the show and "watched every night" in Sydney. As we meandered down from the Parking he told me that he was the family historian and discovered through his own research that he was a descendant of Edward I" (Will C field notes).

While some queuers perceived those who had bypassed the queue as being lucky as they would not have to wait so long, that was not necessarily the case. Our researchers Lowri and Henrike documented the experiences of a 79 year old man who had brought a series of correspondences between Margaret Rutherford and the author Dawn Langley Simmons. After a series of exchanges with production staff and a series of experts they eventually decided that they did not have the appropriate expert to evaluate this unique collection and recommended he seek out LGBT and transgender history groups (Lowri field notes). This whole process took some time, had a number of false starts and ultimately ended without an evaluation. Despite this the bearer had clearly enjoyed his experience. He got to meet the presenter, Fiona Bruce, the executive producer Simon Shaw, various experts and had, despite the wait, had a lovely time. Even when queuing is bypassed it might be replaced by long waits – but the length of the wait is not necessarily the only factor in people's reflections on their experiences.

### **Concluding queues**

In contrast to the appearance of an orderly, singular line, queueing proves to be a complex and contradictory set of activities. Idealised and romantic notions of queueing as a peculiarly British trait are both reinforced and belied by the diverse strategies and tactics employed by queuers faced with a long wait. Even when you avoid the queue there is still waiting (which might take longer than a queue). Queues might break down into crowds and participants far from complaining might welcome the change.

The Collaborative Event Ethnography proved invaluable to consider how to generate multiple and polyvocal accounts of a single event. Unlike most anthropological research that relies on duration and repetition to gauge the reliability and nuance of field data, the presence of 21 perspectives and the aggregated collection of interviews, comments, and field notes provided rich and diverse accounts of the dynamics of the Ightham Mote Antiques Roadshow queues. Queues are an inevitable and anticipated element of attending the roadshow element of the broadcast programme. As we have shown, our discussions and experiences reveal how attendees might grumble, leave, or otherwise complain about the wait, but at the same time they navigate the multiple queueing systems with creativity and sociability.

While in a British queue a stoic disposition might be reinforced through conversation, and where a group of queuers are engaged in a shared endeavour a silent, austere queue might be transformed into a chatty queue-munity where a sense of collective endeavour forges fleeting friendships which affect the perception of pleasure and the passage of time while in the queue. While at its most basic the queue is a straightforward linear system of allocating resources, it can also be a highly internally and externally organised social system with a social and organisational fluidity that helps participants adapt to the task of waiting. When internal and external factors align favourably the queue becomes a social space where a sunny disposition might be collectively achieved, even while participants stand in the rain. Likewise – it might not – and even if it is a positive experience for many – it might not be for all. The queue is many things to many people.

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