

THE ENGLISH VILLAGE IN *EMMA*: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF HERITAGE DRAMAS, LOCATION FILMING AND HOST COMMUNITIES

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ABSTRACT

This article considers location filming for heritage dramas in rural England, focusing on the experiences of the communities that “host” television crews during production. The article specifically examines the filming of the 2009 BBC adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Emma*, for which the historic Kent village, Chilham, doubled as the fictional Highbury. In doing so, it interrogates two central aspects. First, it illuminates some of the practical issues

and economic and cultural impact of location filming for heritage dramas within rural areas. Second, it reflects upon how a community experiences and responds to its status as the host of such a series, considering the impact this has upon questions of identity and heritage. The article draws upon original empirical research, oral history interviews and community archive building conducted within the Chilham community and with Kent Film Office. It explores the memories and experiences of the local population involved in the television location filming process, as both spectators and participants. We thus consider the significance of location from the point of view of those who solicit, resist, profit from, and are caused problems by the temporary transformation of their local space into a television drama shooting space, forging new connections between production practices, location shooting and heritage series and national television/cinema.

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In April 2009, a television production team arrived in the historic English village of Chilham, in the southeast county of Kent, for a weeklong shoot. The attractive village, replete with original period features including Tudor and Jacobean houses and a Norman-built church, had been chosen to double as the fictional market village of Highbury in the BBC's new serial adaptation of Jane Austen's *Emma* (1815). Airing the following autumn, the production strengthened Chilham's standing as a favoured site for location shooting for feature films and television series. The village has been used repeatedly as a rural and heritage filming location across the decades, appearing in Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger's war-time film *A Canterbury Tale* (1944) and a range of literary adaptations – such as the small screen offering *Hercule Poirot's Christmas* (1994) – as well as one-off episodes in magazine or reality television series such as *Top Gear* (2002-). In light of this history, the village has rightly earned a prominent spot on Kent Film Office's online resource "Movie Map Live" (<http://kentfilmoffice.co.uk/kent-movie-map/moviemap-live-2/>).

The presence of the BBC crew added a new chapter to the on-going story of Chilham's identity as regular "host" to film and television crews, where residents and locals have seen the everyday spaces of the village, including the "anatomical essentials" of its church, houses and fields (Massingham 1966 [1952]: 191), transformed temporarily into filmic and televisual *mise-en-scène*. With its four-part structure, high production values and prized Sunday evening slot, *Emma* provides a rich case study for exploring the use of villages in British television series, particularly the importance of shooting on location within contemporary heritage dramas and the impact that this has on host communities.

In recent years location filming has proved an exciting new area of interdisciplinary study for a range of scholars, yielding rich explorations concerning the representation and perception of place (see, for example, Martin-Jones 2005, Roberts 2012), film-induced or screen media tourism as a growing phenomenon (Beeton 2005, Reijnders 2011), and the development of multiple alternative "Hollywoods" that offer distinct cultural and economic frameworks for film and television production in a new global media environment (Gasher 2002, Goldsmith et al. 2010, Tinic 2015). Whilst our research aligns with this work, we offer a new focus on how location filming affects and shapes the experiences of those who permanently inhabit "host" spaces for film and television production. By exploring the highly localised environment of the rural English village and its use within heritage television dramas, we employ a methodology that draws attention to this hitherto

under-explored area within location filming debates. Using Chilham as a case study, we have been able to combine traditional textual analyses with original empirical research and public engagement work, including oral history interviews with Chilham residents and Parish Councillors as well as a semi-structured interview with Kent Film Officer, Gabrielle Lindemann, who served as a key figure in co-ordinating the 2009 *Emma* shoot. This allows us to put into dialogue concerns that are often considered mutually exclusive, forging new connections between production practices, location shooting and heritage series and national television/cinema, as well as ideas about community and film-induced tourism.

The article suggests that the process of hosting acts as a catalyst for new negotiations and understandings of rural community identity. We argue that exploring the memories and experiences of village residents and the local officials who represent them offers new insight into how rural English community space defines and redefines itself as a heritage commodity available for exploitation within the contemporary media industries. In doing so, we bring to the fore particular questions of scale and location aesthetics that differ from several key studies on mobile production and alternative filming sites. For example, Serra Tinic's discussion of Canada as a production hub considers the country's adaptability, emphasising the "diversity of its physical landscape" (2015: ix) as key to its success in the global market. In contrast, we focus on the small and relatively stable space of an English village both as a rural location distinct from the urban and, also, as a site loaded with particular connotations for heritage film and television drama. As this article details, Chilham has appealed to location scouts precisely for its lack of diversity and its unchanged nature. Its period features make it representative of specific signifiers of "Englishness", heritage and rural space.

For this reason, we suggest that the specificity of rural English village space structures the mundane logistics of location filming in particular ways, where questions of distinctly national and rural heritage shape the way residents and local agents articulate its value as a heritage commodity. Locations like Chilham have a monopoly on notions of period authenticity for heritage drama, and thus offer marked qualities that contrast with other alternative film production locations which, in the increased "globalisation of story settings" have been able to "advertise themselves through the range of locations they can stand in for" (Goldsmith et al. 2010: 8-9). This monopoly has particular ramifications for Chilham and the way its residents and policy makers understand and seek to memorialise and exploit its steady sedimentation of location filming experiences.

1. THE LAY OF THE LAND: RESEARCHING THE ENGLISH VILLAGE ON SCREEN

Following Albert Moran in his work on rural cinema and classical Hollywood, our research shares a concern for the “spatial footprint” that audio-visual media lays “across different environments, both physical and imaginary” (2006: 225). In rural-focused television series this “footprint” is manifested in numerous ways: how local authoritative bodies and location managers coordinate the transformation of the selected sites; how rural communities experience the moment-by-moment process of a transformation and subsequently respond to seeing their spaces (and, sometimes, themselves) on screen; and how tourism opportunities are generated and exploited by rural communities in the wake of location filming.

In the last decade there have been significant contributions to the study of television production histories in Britain, and several begin to address these issues (see, for example, Cooke 2012). Yet, there remains a strong desire to prioritise the employment and construction of city spaces for television dramas, with Manchester and London drawing particular attention in British television scholarship due to their long-standing small screen offers. These include ground-breaking dramas such as *Queer as Folk* (1999-2000) and innovative sitcoms such as *Peep Show* (2003-2015), as well as the long-running soap operas *Coronation Street* (1960-), set in the fictional town of Weatherfield in Salford, Greater Manchester, and *EastEnders* (1986-), set in the fictional London borough of Walford. These two large-scale cities may indeed dominate productions because they work to represent wider geographical areas and communities in the UK. Manchester’s Canal Street in *Queer as Folk*, for example, stands in for any of the country’s gay neighbourhoods, whilst the borough of Croydon in *Peep Show* serves to signify “affordable London”. This domination, however, leaves numerous unanswered questions regarding the use of rural space within British television series.

Writing on rural settings in film, Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield suggest that “the turning of the camera eye towards the land has an equally prolific and consistent history”, one which has been obscured by the sustained focus upon urban space in film including the suggestion of an “innate” city-cinema relationship (2006: 1). Their considerations of “rural cinema”, which takes into account both the use of land and the lives of its inhabitants, can extend to British television series. Focusing on the village as a space “central to the popular sentimentalisation of English country life” (Bunce 2003: 21),

a short list of relevant texts might include the long-running sitcom *The Last of the Summer Wine* (1973-2010), the ever popular *The Vicar of Dibley* (1994-2007, 2013, 2015), the veterinarian-centred drama *All Creatures Great and Small* (1978-80, 1988-90) and medical dramedy *Doc Martin* (2004-), as well as non-fictional series such as *The Village* (1993-2001), and, more recently, *Penelope Keith’s Hidden Villages* (2014-).

The English village has been subject to sustained use in contemporary heritage series in particular, however. As with their cinematic predecessors, these productions are distinct from the above examples in that they are always set in the past, typically drawing on the nation’s literary canon for inspiration, and celebrated for their commitment to authentic period details. Along with costume and set design, the careful choice and use of locations is central to the “museum aesthetic” (Dyer 1995: 204) with location filming often taking place in rural areas – especially country houses and villages. This makes clear the links with a larger heritage industry that serves to commodify British history (more often English history) through physical places and objects “for consumption in the international image market” (Higson 2006: 91). Within this broader conception of heritage, such series offer a pictorial portrayal of Britain that selectively connects the national character to the respected traditions of the land. This skewed but potent association, exacerbated by the weekly structure of television series in which repetition cements the association in memory, encourages audiences (and, indeed, researchers) to make erroneous assumptions about rural life in Britain, both past and present.¹ For this reason, we approach the question of location in contemporary heritage series by considering both the aesthetics and structures of the fictional texts with their “imagined” geographies, and the ways in which the real geographical spaces and inhabitants of rural England play host to their creation.

Working with residents raises a number of methodological issues. Here, our position as Chilham outsiders, which left us susceptible to unenthused or unwilling community participants and open to charges of “othering” in our activities and analysis. To address these concerns, we consulted the local Parish Council in order to design research activities that would both appeal to local residents seeking further information about the area’s location filming history and grant us

1 Indeed, Catherine Fowler and Gillian Helfield make a distinction between heritage and rural cinema whereby the former is always set in the past and “the return to the rural can be seen as an expression of venerability” while the latter, in contrast, “may be set in the present, and the return to the rural tends to be less an expression of venerability than of vulnerability” (2006: 5).

opportunities to gain insights into the opinions, experiences and impact of location shooting on village life, particularly in relation to questions of identity and heritage. This focus on working within and with the village community culminated in a public engagement event held in the village hall in autumn 2015, coordinated with Parish Council members and supported by Kent Film Office. The day featured film clips profiling the range of productions shot on location in the village as well as exhibition stands offering additional images, information and materials (for example, newspaper clippings) from local and national archives pertaining to the relationship that these productions have with Chilham. Activities that sought to directly engage the public with the research included: a DIY location map to which visitors were asked to pin their location-specific filming memories; a scanning and photography stand collecting objects, images and materials that visitors brought to the event; postcards on which visitors indicated their level of interest in the subject; and oral history interviews which allowed us to collect more detailed memories and opinions. The interactive and informal nature of these activities engaged community members as co-producers within the research process, resulting in 19 annotations to the location map, over 26 scanned materials (photographs, autographs and newspaper clippings), 22 postcards and 5 oral history interviews each lasting between 8 and 22 minutes.² Moreover, the activities ensured a polyphony of voices in the research as it progressed, helping to mitigate issues of “othering” and draw attention to the complexities of the community’s experiences with location shoots.

2. “THAT QUINTESSENTIAL IMAGE”: ECONOMIC, PRACTICAL AND AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

As already mentioned, existing analyses of place in television studies have largely been consigned to urban space, rather than rural environments and locale. While acknowledging the theoretical considerations that underpin this focus,³ there are more practical reasons why urban space and critical work on screen locations are so strongly connected. In the UK specifically, investment for location shooting is largely concentrated

in London due to its skilled workforce, transport links and proximity to several major studio bases. That said, in recent years location filming has begun “rippling out” (Dams 2014: n.p.) with shoots occurring across England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales and within a range of rural locations. Regional film offices that work to coordinate location shooting opportunities offer contemporary film and television productions alternative location sites outside the capital. The growing desire to “relocate” film and television productions is in part a reaction to rising costs of filming in the big cities, especially London, but also a coordinated recognition of the economic value of location filming for smaller geographical areas and their communities. Film Officer Gabrielle Lindemann details the remit of Kent Film Office:

We are essentially an economic development [...] initiative and it’s our main task to get as much filming as possible into the county [...] because of the economic benefits to the local communities, whilst at the same time protecting residents and businesses from major disruptions (2016: n.p.).

The initial economic benefit is typically in the form of a one-off payment from the production company to a local council for use of the public areas under its jurisdiction. For television series, such as *Emma*, the payment tends to be modest (hundreds, rather than thousands of pounds) due to tight budgets that must cover the vast range of expenses incurred from several days of location filming: road closures, transport for cast and crew, extras, catering, parking for the unit base, and so on. Alistair Ralph, who served on the Chilham Parish Council from 1999 to 2015, confirms that despite the amount of filming that has occurred in the village over the years there has never been that much money on offer:

There’s always someone who says it’s two thousand pounds a day, or five hundred pounds an hour, but in actual fact we’ve never found that sort of money arriving. Finally, we finished up working with the Kent Film Office saying to them “would you please be our agent, and achieve as much as you can for our community?” (2015: n.p.).

Though the English village has immeasurable symbolic value within discourses on British national identity (see, for example, Lowenthal 1991, Sibley 1997, Brace 2003), Ralph’s comments show that pre-production negotiations with film and

2 The population of the village is 1634 according to the 2011 census.

3 This includes, for example, the aforementioned representational qualities of cities, the way moving images replicate the urban practice of *flânerie* (Bruno 1997), and the “star” quality of certain cities (Pomerance 2007).

television crews quickly reduce the space to an object to be purchased and consumed. This tallies with W. J. T. Mitchell's arguments regarding the value of landscape, where at a "most basic, vulgar level" (1994: 15) it is expressed in monetary terms. Moreover, the repetition of similarly staged outdoor sequences in contemporary heritage series offers a compelling illustration of Mitchell's subsequent assertion that in "its double role as commodity and cultural symbol, landscape is the object of fetishistic practices" (1994:15).

Indeed, within the first minutes of the BBC's *Emma*, a highly familiar image of the English village is presented via one medium long shot that includes a market square, a row of small timbered houses and, in the background, a church. The neat composition occurs during a sequence that serves to establish the backstory and character traits of the eponymous heroine. As a voice-over details how the "sun continued to shine brightly on Emma" despite the premature death of her mother, and a backward glance to less fortunate neighbours signals the three-year old Emma's (Lyla Barrett-Rye) burgeoning inquisitiveness, the audience's desire for an oft-produced image of English village life is also satiated. Lindemann is convinced that the exceptional topography of Chilham, which allows such an economic shot, is a key reason why the Kent village has been a popular choice for location shoots over the years:

there's very few villages in this country where you can see, in one shot, without panning or tilting [...] that quintessential image: a church [...] a few houses. That's the classic shot. That's what everybody wants. [...] It has, immediately, English village (2016: n.p.).

The convenient layout of Chilham's buildings may help a director quickly establish an English village location and, to a large extent, the country's traditional social fabric, where the village acts as a "totem of stability and tabernacle of values" (Chase 1989: 132). Heritage dramas still require their production teams to mask the ever-increasing signs of contemporary life, however. In *Emma*, the shoot's persistent use of the square, which accommodates a significant amount of residents' parking, required the removal of cars and a careful arrangement of gravel to disguise its modern surface. Road signs were also cleared and temporary trappings, including fake Regency shop fronts and market stalls, were installed to complete the illusion of an authentic nineteenth century rural environment. Residents were forewarned of the disruption with a leaflet drop a couple of months in advance of the proposed filming, allowing them to object and/or raise particu-

lar concerns, though the decision to progress with the shoot ultimately lay with the Parish Council.

This suggests that the village residents possess a relatively weak degree of control at an individual level when it comes to hosting location shoots in their local environment, making it all the more important that regional film offices work with local councils to marry their priority to "maximise inward investment from film and television companies' with that of "safeguard[ing] civil rights and interests" (<http://kentfilmoffice.co.uk/about-us/about-kent-film-office/>). In preparation for filming *Emma*, a carefully planned site visit proved crucial to striking this balance, with the experienced Lindemann able to anticipate issues and co-ordinate efforts from a range of interested parties:

We [...] had a big recce with the film company because they needed a couple of weeks to [...] think about exactly what they wished to do [...] With Alistair [Ralph], with Kent Highway Services, and with a police officer [...] we kind of worked out the compromise between the closing of the square for prep work and for filming (2016: n.p.).

One of the biggest issues addressed was the need to find alternative residents' parking for the shoot's duration. With the village's visitors' car park (approximately three hundred metres from the square) already identified by the production crew as an ideal spot for *Emma*'s unit base, the well-timed recce allowed Lindemann to make the suggestion that this visitors' car park could be freed for residents if the crew sought an alternative unit base in the grounds of nearby Chilham Castle, an imposing Jacobean building that serves as a private home. Through confidential negotiations with the Castle's owners, an arrangement was soon agreed. While such seemingly mundane details are increasingly acknowledged in scholarly discussions about filming activity that occurs outside established media capitals (see, for example, Sanson 2014), emphasising them here reveals their centrality to the processes of production and, importantly, credits host communities as collaborators.

Along these lines, another major concern brought up during the recce was the flow of traffic through the village, given that the square also functions as a public road, granting access to several key services including the post office and a primary school. At the time of *Emma*'s shoot, Greater London was the only UK authority that possessed legal powers to close roads being used for filming. This meant that

Kent Highway Services were very reluctant to shut down the square completely at any point across the proposed filming week. Anticipating this issue, a member of *Emma*'s production team attended a Parish Council meeting in early February to discuss road closure requirements and establish a point of contact that would be used when affected residents and businesses needed to be consulted. With the relationship between the Council and the production team developing smoothly, Lindemann then used the recce to work with Kent Highway Services on devising a one-way system around the square that would remain open during filming for essential access (for example, the school run). These arrangements were subsequently communicated to the wider village community and agreed upon before filming commenced.

Whilst practical details shape the meanings and resonance of heritage texts for host and regional communities, shedding light on them can also assist in understanding how the "look" and "feel" of a production is initially imagined and then, later, realised. The flow of traffic through Chilham, for example, needed to be minimised and rerouted during the filming of *Emma*, but it actually makes visible certain spatial arrangements that appealed to the BBC team during their pre-production location scouting. As the producer, George Ormond, reveals in a 2009 interview with the regional news network *Kent Online*:

this was the first [village] that we actually visited, and we didn't visit anywhere else because we loved it. [...] It offers us so much [...] the texture, the square works so well. We've got roads coming off the square that gives us [...] depth, room to move (n.p.).

This interest in the village's mobile quality evidences the production's early desire to maintain some of the source material's concern for the spatial and, by extension, social dynamics of rural life. In keeping with Austen's novel, the English village in the BBC's adaptation is not a neutral space in which to stage dialogue but, rather, a complex site that occasions a range of character interactions, serving narrative and thematic developments.

The series' adherence to Austen's use of the village not as "a vignette with the background faded out, but a focus, or a nodal point from which lines radiate into the wider society" (Harding 1998: 50) is made particularly clear through its extensive and lively use of exterior shots. These shots show characters approaching doorways or leaning out of windows to share news, gossip, and the occasional secretive glance

with their neighbours. By the end of *Emma*'s first episode, Miss Bates' "very Elizabethan cottage" (Herbert 2009: n.p.) is established as a particular spatial marker, grounding the viewer in the village's geography despite the constant toings and froings of its central square. The attention given to Miss Bates' house during the filming of *Emma* inevitably required the privately owned residential property to be more carefully "dressed" than some of the other buildings on the square. This combined with the fact that several actors (especially Tamsin Greig as Miss Bates) were required to look and lean out of the first floor window meant that negotiations with the owners, beyond those already conducted through the Parish Council, had to occur. Ralph confirms that in instances like these a "private arrangement" – alongside assurances that any necessary repainting will be done once filming concludes – often eases potential resistance (2009: n.p.).

It sometimes takes more than monetary compensation to ensure a positive work environment in these kinds of rural spaces, however. Discussing the "tangible difference" in bringing the "circus to town" in a rural rather than urban site, location manager Jonah Coombs states that when "moving into a small community, it is important for the production to recognise that and offer something back over and above a donation to their residents association" (quoted in Dams 2014: n.p.). This can mean offering employment or training opportunities to the local community but, at the very least, it should mean satisfying residents' interest in the filming process by allowing them some access to the set.

3. "KEEN TO SEE WHAT'S GOING ON": THE PLEASURES OF BEING AN ON-SET SPECTATOR

The BBC team were clearly indebted to a co-operative local population when they came to shoot in Chilham in 2009. *Emma*'s producer, Ormond, offers the following praise in his *Kent Online* interview:

The villagers have been absolutely fantastic. I mean I think it's a pretty disruptive process coming in and filming [...] we've had to cover up people's doors, we've painted people's houses, we've covered up their fences, we've put weeds outside their houses, we've cleared the roads, we've covered the square in gravel and they have absolutely been fantastic about it [...] they've been a joy to work with (n.p.).

From the perspective of film offices, a supportive host community is crucial for a successful location shoot and ensuring filming activity remains a viable income stream for the region. Alongside Chilham's appealing topographical arrangement, Lindemann cites the villagers' approachability as an important element in its continued success as a filming location: "[They are] really film-friendly" (2016: n.p.). She adds that there are several examples where this is not the case, noting that residents and business owners in urban areas similarly used for their authentic period features (such as London's Columbia Road) are increasingly frustrated by repeated filming activity.

One reason for this contrast in attitude between heritage urban areas and heritage villages concerns the everyday quietness of rural areas. Film and television location shoots prompt a temporary change of pace for rural communities, increasing the volume of people, traffic, noise and activity spaces. Villagers have the opportunity, for example, to watch bustling crews operate an arsenal of expensive equipment (from cameras to rain machines) and talented casts perform a range of emotions (from tearful goodbyes to joyful reunions). The question of access thus becomes an important issue in pre-production negotiations, with regional film offices agreeing with location managers that the set will be open to the public at key points during the shoot. As Lindemann puts it, people "don't want to be just locked away in their house. They do want to watch." (2016: n.p.)

The enjoyment derived from on-set spectatorship is evidenced in the oral history interviews we conducted with Chilham's local population. Alistair Ralph, for example, sees no negatives in the activity, stating that "it is great fun to have filming" and that spending time with a film or television crew is "wonderful" (2015: n.p.). Other residents and locals discuss their curiosity regarding production processes, including photographer Steve Weaver, who admits "I'm always keen to see what's going on." (2015: n.p.) With regard to the filming of heritage dramas, additional thrills stem from seeing the creativity and attention to detail involved when constructing a particular period. One woman, who lives in a town neighbouring Chilham, recalls her anticipation of *Emma*'s filming thus:

I heard about the filming of a drama in Chilham, it was not specified what the drama was apart from the fact it was period drama. And as I love history, I thought: that's something I'd really like to see. Because it's obviously going to involve a lot of artistry, a lot of historical interests, I must go and see it (Anon Resident One 2016: n.p.).

Her words give credence to the focus that the skilful transformation of an English village often earns in a heritage series' publicity material. The broadcast listings magazine *Radio Times*, for example, detailed the Oxfordshire filming locations of *Downton Abbey* (2010-2015) during its final series (Walker-Arnott 2015: n.p.) while, in the same year, the tabloid newspaper *The Daily Mail* created an online feature that allows readers to scroll between "before and after" images of Corsham, the Wiltshire town used in the first series of the BBC's remake of the heritage drama *Poldark* (2015-) (Creighton 2015: n.p.). For *Emma*, there is a feature entitled "Emma in Chilham" (2009: n.p.) on the BBC's website to consider as well as the aforementioned *Kent Online* interviews with cast and crew, which were conducted on the village set. These materials all gesture towards the residents of their respective filming locations, pointing to the impact that shoots have on daily village life, but do not employ their actual voices. It thus remains important to offer host communities authority over their personal experiences and provide a platform for them to speak. Relying exclusively on outsider observations can deny certain elements of a community's experience, and often reduces the residents' role to merely that of passive bystanders, obscuring their importance as essential facilitators for the entire filming process.

Giving greater attention to the voices of locals and residents also throws up discrepancies in attitudes towards and assumptions about the pleasures of location filming. For example, Weaver contrasts his sustained interest in location filming with the popular belief that the activity offers little excitement beyond the short bursts of recording. As a point of distinction, he references an advertisement used during the UK airing of *Downton Abbey*'s fourth series whereby costumed actors are shown sitting on set, frustrated and bored by the long downtime between takes:

I love the whole project [...] I don't just sit there sort of looking bored, you know sometimes you see these adverts [...] I'm just sitting there looking and watching everything that's happening and seeing how it's all put together (2015: n.p.).

Weaver's attentiveness to the quieter moments of location filming, resulting in a series of photographs for his flickr account (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/steveweaver/albums>), is not isolated. Another Chilham local constructed a comprehensive scrapbook, documenting the entire shoot with annotated photographs and other materials expanding and

commenting upon the minutiae of the filming process. The painstaking attention to detail evidenced in the scrapbook, which records exchanges between residents, the transformation of different houses and shop fronts, and illustrations and extracts from the literary text upon which the adaptation is based, would seem to counteract Lindemann's supposition that "after about fifteen minutes people get very bored" (2016: n.p.). However, the Film Officer admits that levels of interest can vary between productions, adding that you have to "feel your way around" (2016: n.p.) each location shoot to gauge its appeal to the local population and, accordingly, the amount of access that residents desire.

For *Emma*, interest in the production was undoubtedly greater due to how the series made use of the village's status as a heritage conservation area, foregrounding its well-preserved historic architecture and temporarily restoring long-gone traditions, such as a market day. The presence of horses, sheep and other livestock in the normally car-strewn square offered additional appeal, given that animals are often "key icons in ideas about rural lifestyle and ideas of the idyll" (Jones 2003: 285-6). In her interview with *Kent Online*, Tamsin Greig stresses this play-off between the authenticity of the village's existing period appearance and rural location, and the changes brought about by the production:

the art department have done the most amazing thing to transform that place. I mean it is beautiful anyway but it just looks extraordinary [...] And the people who live there seem to be marvelling at it as well. They know they live in a piece of history but, suddenly, when it looks like it, it's just delightful (2009: n.p.).

Beyond the immediate pleasures of seeing the village's past evoked through meticulous set design, Chilham residents and business owners also seem to appreciate how the filming of heritage dramas has the potential to boost tourism in the area. Indeed, the village's location filming history is interwoven with its overarching identity as a tourist site. The businesses that lie at its heart, such as bed and breakfasts, tearooms, gift and antiques shops, are tourism-related, trading on their period features in much the same way that film and television companies are prone to do. As Lindemann comments, staple English television series, such as *Emma* or *Hercule Poirot's Christmas*, fit with the village's tourism offer: "when you get a match like that, that's really useful" (2016: n.p.).

4. "REALLY PUSHING TOURISM": THE POSSIBILITY OF A LOCATION FILMING LEGACY

Noelle O'Connor et al. summarise four central categories of existing film-induced tourism research. These encompass: a) "film-induced tourism as a destination motivator"; b) "film induced-tourists"; c) "the impact of film-induced tourism on both tourists and residents"; and d) "film-induced destination marketing activities" (2008: 424). Our own study relates most clearly to c), considering residents in particular. Some existing critical work has focused on residents, but this has largely been relegated to considering how film-induced tourism affects communities *after* the fact of filming. See, for example, Busby et al.'s 2003 study of residents' perceptions of film-induced tourism in relation to Agatha Christie adaptations filming in South West England, or O'Neill et al.'s 2005 study of residents in Cephalonia and their responses to tourism in the wake of the filming of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* (2001). The experience of the host community as witnesses, participants and collaborators in the process of filming itself has rarely been critically addressed. Pre-production and production stages might be given greater attention in tourism research, since perceptions of the marketability of rural spaces affect the way residents – local councillors in particular – respond to requests for location shooting, but also how residents react to hosting film crews in light of a sedimentary build up of a screen tourism related identity in sites like Chilham, where shooting has taken place repeatedly over time.

Film-induced tourism in part works by encouraging visitors to match fictional locations to their real counterparts but, in the case of heritage television series, it also encourages visitors to explore the pre-existing heritage authenticity of that location – the very reason for its selection as a heritage drama location in the first place. In this way the BBC's adaptation of *Emma* can be seen to trade less on the use of local space as "a place of possibility and fantasy" (Blandford et al. 2009: 18), and more upon local space as a marker of realism and authenticity in regard to period details. Chilham as a filming location for a Regency drama is loaded with a pre-existing "tourist gaze" (Urry 1990), insofar as the village capitalises on its status as a historic rural village for its tourist revenue. The cultural image that the village constructs for this gaze is thus re-channelled through the medium of period drama in its use as a location filming site. Productions like *Emma* use the realism of the village's heritage aesthetic to support the fiction of its period storytelling. For the host community

witnessing the filming taking place, these gazes potentially interact and overlap. Throughout location shooting the local population might simultaneously view the space as that of the everyday and of “home”, as a tourist space replete with heritage attractions, and as the filmic space in the fictional world of *Emma*. The third, filmic gaze builds upon the everyday and tourist gazes, but also speculates about a fourth – the specifically *television*-tourist inflected gaze through which the village might be viewed in the future.

Whilst the ways of viewing local space during the process of location filming are addressed above, the fourth gaze requires further consideration here, especially in regards to how policy makers view the exploitation of local space as contributing towards a larger Chilham “brand”. With *Emma*, this relates quite specifically to the way in which the market square stands in for Austen’s fictionalised environment. In the novel, Highbury is introduced as a “large and populous village almost amounting to a town” (2003 [1815]: 7); typical of Austen’s narration, physical details are sparse, allowing for a freer interpretation in adaptation across media. The BBC’s adaptation certainly reduces the scale of Highbury in choosing Chilham as its equivalent, but capitalises on the existing period features to add both authenticity and pictorial spectacle to the production design. Seriality offered the chance to further build audience familiarity with the locale. In contrast to other heritage dramas shot in the village, such as two Agatha Christie adaptations that were produced as single feature-length episodes, the division of the *Emma* story into a multi-part adaptation offered the village more sustained exposure over a longer period of time when the series was broadcast.

Both Chilham Parish Council and Kent Film Office strongly emphasise legacy and tourism in conceptualising the value of location shooting for the village. These two concerns are continually at the forefront of Ralph’s discussion of his location shooting experiences, where he describes “really pushing tourism” (2015: n.p.) as the main income stream from location filming activities. Tourism opportunities are particularly significant to rural communities, like the one in Chilham, for making the decision to embrace and host film crews. Ralph’s comments suggest that he conceives the value of location shooting less in terms of immediate income or experiential opportunities for residents. Rather, the value of location shooting is configured in terms of tourist potential, and the opportunity for a degree of location branding that can be exploited beyond the immediate hosting experience, and beyond the initial airing or screening of any television or film content produced in the village.

In *Emma*, as in television drama in general, the English village used for the location shoot is never directly named. This makes it significantly more difficult for the host community to capitalise on the appearance of their village on screen. Fictional screen narratives that have utilised Chilham as a shooting space have uniformly used it as a stand in for fictional environs, from Lymstock in *Agatha Christie’s Marple: The Moving Finger* (2006) to Rittle-On-Sea in the First World War-set sitcom *Chickens* (2011, 2013).⁴ Direct reference to the village might be included in the credit sequence when a production airs but the promotion of the village, especially within a heritage television series, is more likely to be achieved in local and national press surrounding the shoot, and through the exploitation of the heritage aesthetic employed in the production, highlighting the period features of the environment. The television text itself, therefore, cannot wholly do the work of promoting the rural village brand.

With rural tourism now “a key component of English tourism [...] heavily dominated by the domestic, not the overseas, visitor”, generating billions of pounds per year (Busby et al. 2003: 291), the question of how to make the most of the publicity that surrounds location filming in English villages has become more pressing. For some areas, communities have built highly localised tourist industries around their status as prominent rural television locations, offering tours and memorabilia. Holmfirth in Huddersfield, which stands in for the village location at the centre of *Last of the Summer Wine* and Port Isaac, the Cornish village that doubles for the fictional Portwenn in *Doc Martin*, have both profited from tourism related to shooting in the area. The website for Cornwall’s tourist board promotes Port Isaac’s “Doc Martin experiences”, for example, offering the opportunity for “die-hard fans of the series” to rent Fern Cottage, the site of the fictional Doctor Ellingham’s (Martin Clunes) surgery, “when cameras aren’t rolling” (<https://www.visitcornwall.com/about-cornwall/blogging-cornwall/doc-martin-locations-to-visit>).

Chilham has not yet exploited its filming histories to such a degree. In part, this is due to the dispersal of its associated televisual and filmic texts; the village has hosted a range of productions, but is not strongly associated with one single text, nor any one long-running, multiple series production equivalent to *Doc Martin*. Ralph discusses the significance of *Emma* specifically to the branding potential of the village on screen:

4 The closet equivalency for the actual village in a fictional narrative is Chillingbourne in *A Canterbury Tale*.

Emma was the one where we thought it was really going to happen. We had a lady over from Holland who was doing quite a nice hardback tourist guide based on *Emma* [...] it really didn't happen [...] knock on effect? No, I can't say we've got hordes of people all walking saying "where's this, where was that?" (2015: n.p.).

The apparent lack of capitalisation on the exposure caused by the shoot can be considered from a range of angles. Ralph mentions that the village itself does not currently and did not at the time include much in the way of branded product or tourist experience directly tied into *Emma*. This contrasts to other similarly used rural locations, such as that of Corsham, which in 2015 doubled as the Cornish town of Truro in *Poldark*. Following the series, the town sought to capitalise on their association with the production more directly, selling *Poldark* products in the local post office and tourist information centre.

The reception of the adaptation itself of course also impacts on the reach and familiarity of the production and its likelihood to connect with audiences as potential tourists. Whilst the *Emma* adaptation was generally well received, it did not make a major impact in the vein of other high profile BBC Austen productions, such as the 1995 serial adaptation of *Pride and Prejudice*. Reviews in mainstream British newspapers criticised the BBC's over-reliance on Austen material and the prevalence of *Emma* adaptations specifically, questioning "whether we need another Emma at all [...] Why keep churning out the same classics?" (Wollaston 2009: n.p.). *The Independent* suggested, based on the series' declining ratings across its four-episode run, that the costume drama had "had its day" (Brown 2009: n.p.).

Emma may not have proved to be the series that had a lasting impact on Chilham's tourist futures but it did significantly affect the English village's potential for income in other ways. For Kent Film Office it was a "turning point" (Lindemann 2016: n.p.) regarding legislation for road closures in the county, and the need to ensure that this issue would not deter other production companies from location filming in the future. Acknowledging that the office was "lucky" (Lindemann 2016: n.p.) to have found a solution with Kent Highways and a supportive local population for the filming of *Emma* in Chilham, Lindemann decided to go to Parliament to put in place a Highways Act that now allows them to close roads for filming in Kent. This undoubtedly makes location filming in the county more attractive, as evidenced by the

steady rise of large film productions – including *Avengers: Age of Ultron* (2015) – that have shot on location in Kent in the last five years.

5. "THE VILLAGE CARRIES ON": MAINTAINING A SENSE OF CHARACTER AND COMMUNITY

Although in his interview Ralph conveys disappointment that the high profile heritage series *Emma* did not produce a greater boost in tourism for the village, there are positives to be gleaned from the situation. As O'Neill et al. note in their study of Cephalonian tourism post *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*, "the process and after-effects of filming are not always without negative ramifications" (2005: 211). They consider the ability of location filming not just to alter an area's "entire tourist structure" (2005: 211), but to impact substantially upon the infrastructure of a location in ways that do not benefit the host community at the time of filming. For example, the presence of a film crew, with their requirements for large-scale accommodation, transportation and services, can "parlay into profiteering which ultimately drives up local prices" (Riley et al. 1998: 931). In addition, host communities in rural locations may be left "to deal with the consequences" that their resources cannot cope with, such as "increased traffic and crowding" (Busby et al. 2003: 292). This, in turn, can make them less attractive to film and television production companies. Residents of Corsham are particularly attuned to this issue, given that after the filming of *Poldark* a swell in population led to additional signs being placed on the historic high street. Perceiving these signs as detrimental to the look and, by extension, the appeal of their small market town, one resident commented to the national press: "We are furious at the insensitive, high-handed way the council has dealt with this. This is a street that has been filmed by two separate companies because it's such a perfect historical street." (quoted in Wilkinson 2014: n.p.)

This issue of how film-induced tourism might irreversibly change the identity of an area is one that the residents of Chilham note in their interviews. Weaver, for example, thoughtfully contrasts the village's fate with that of nearby Pluckley, which was used as the location for the 1950s-set comedy drama series *The Darling Buds of May* (1991-1993) and quickly became a "massive tourist spot" with "people coming in coach loads" (2015: n.p.):

What's quite interesting with Chilham is that, to me, it never seems to change the character of the village or the way the village carries on. It just seems to – something comes and then it goes and it goes back to being Chilham again (2015: n.p.).

For Chilham then, perhaps the greatest advantage of the muted tourist response to *Emma* is that the village retains its broader value as a heritage site and that location filming is still viewed by the local population primarily in terms of the pleasurable experiential opportunities it affords them.

As a final point then, it is interesting to note how location filming and the subsequent release or air dates of productions offer a focus to village life, serving to bring residents and neighbours together in ways that are reminiscent of the now demised village fête. One resident of a nearby town notes that the *Emma* production not only promoted friendly interactions, whereby people would meet repeatedly over the filming week and chat about the production's progress over coffee, but also fostered a shared sense of "insider" knowledge that would be taken through to the air date (Anon Resident One 2015: n.p.). Another woman, living on the outskirts of Chilham, offers a similar comment, stating "it's nice to watch it all on television and to know where it is, and who lives there [...] I think people really enjoy it." (Anon Resident Two 2014: n.p.) These remarks tally with Steve Blandford et al.'s survey work with Welsh audiences in regard to the location filming of the revived *Dr Who* series (2005-) and its spin-off *Torchwood* (2007-2011), whereby they suggest that audiences derive pleasure from the status of these productions as "mainstream, international successes that could also be connected to the places in which they lived and recognised on the screen" (2009: 17). Such pleasures clearly register in similar ways for residents and neighbours of Chilham, but the sense of identity is far more localised, incorporating larger ideas about nation within the more narrowly focused, closely bounded rural locality of the English village and its own sense of community.

6. CONCLUSION

Our work suggests that a mixed-method approach – using oral history in combination with community focused memory work, textual analysis and production history research – can produce new knowledge about rural location shooting, especially the creation and exploitation of the English village as a

heritage media commodity. Our single-village case study offers new insight into how location filming might be viewed as a "hosting" process, and the particular matrices of economic and cultural concerns that shape the relatively stable rural village space as a heritage shooting space in contrast to more transient urban locations.

Focusing on the specificity of the English village, as represented by Chilham, and the ways in which its "quintessential image" (Lindemann 2016: n.p.) of heritage Englishness is articulated by local policy makers and residents, pinpoints how location filming can prove to be particularly transformative for small-scale communities. As our article has shown, histories of location filming benefit from mapping such transformations across different levels – those of policy, public space, and community identity and memory – and by considering how these levels interact. Our findings thus facilitate a shift in focus from top-down approaches to location filming histories – which are led by explorations of how production companies make use of location spaces – towards one in which closer attention is paid to the experiences of the host community. This allows for a new take on the interrelations between location filming, television genres and film-induced tourism, ultimately producing different kinds of national television (and cinema) histories.

In the case of Chilham, local residents express both hopes and frustrations about what filming means for the village and, concordantly, its future as a filming site and film-induced tourist location. The oral history interviews also reveal the ways in which these individuals are able to connect the mundane qualities of the filming process to their own everyday lives, their memories of the village, and their personal sense of (and varied appreciation for) heritage television dramas. Foregrounding these alternative voices produces new understandings about how the commodification of local space, in both the act of location filming and its legacy as a film-induced tourism opportunity, is negotiated and enacted. This leads us to suggest that the individuals who live and work in the village can be considered collaborators and co-producers in the everyday minutiae of rural location filming. They act as facilitators, able to support or obstruct filming practices, and as agents actively involved in harnessing and exploiting the legacy of location filming. This affords them a distinct place within production histories for heritage television dramas, one worthy of greater critical attention.

Film crews like the BBC team producing *Emma* make use of rural village spaces, but those spaces and their communities in turn make use of the production, both at the time of

filming and in crafting future uses and meanings of village space through heritage aesthetics. By incorporating the often-unheard stories of the local community into our analysis, the article presents a new contribution to histories of location filming by highlighting how sometimes it is the distinct, rather than the adaptable, qualities of a location that appeals. Chilham's stories of *Emma* are thus an intriguing starting point for further examination into the role that heritage, location and rurality play in shaping televisual texts, which in turn shape and reshape community experiences and identity.

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