

Gale Primary Sources

Start at the source.

The *Illustrated London News* and Travel

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Various source media, *Illustrated London News* Historical Archive 1842-2003



Introduction

If eighteenth century travel was about the upper classes, the Grand Tour, Rome, Venice and Italy, then the nineteenth century was about “travelling for the Millions” (Thomas Cook). Following the exile of Napoleon in 1814, there was a renewed interest in travel to the continent (Withey, 1997). The first travel guides from the renowned John Murray, with their characteristic red spines, began in 1836 shortly before the publication of *The Illustrated London News*. By 1842, the public fascination with travel was further fuelled by the birth of ‘the Baedeker’, with a travel guide for Germany and Austria being launched in the same year as the *ILN*. The mid-Victorian period was a time of technological advancements and industrial prosperity, all of which contributed to the growth of the travel industry. From the birth of the day trip to Cook’s tours, from Cunard’s vision for crossing the Atlantic to the birth of the White Star Line and the ‘floating palaces’ of the Edwardian era, representations of travel are gloriously captured across the features and advertisements of *The Illustrated London News*.

Starting to Search

A ‘Basic Search’ on **travel** from 1842 through to December 1901 for the ‘entire document’ returns over 3700 hits. Many of these returns feature the word ‘travel’ in its broadest everyday sense rather than as a term which captures an industry, a leisure activity, a ‘holiday’. A search of ‘keywords’ however reveals more specific articles which demonstrate the Victorian’s increased interest in travel; from “Travel and Talk” in the 25 February 1843 issue to the regular features reviewing the guides of writers like Baedeker and

Murray, “Books of Travel” in the 14 July 1877 issue 1983. There are however a number of variants on the word ‘travel’; **traveller, travelling, travelled**. A key feature of *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive* is the ability to ‘fuzzy search’. Under ‘Advanced Search’, one can search for ‘travel’, as either a ‘keyword’ or in the ‘entire document’, and set the ‘fuzzy search’ to ‘high’, ‘medium’ or ‘low’ from the drop down box (the default is ‘none’). The different levels expand the search to account for a range of variants in the search term. Additional benefits of retrieving near matches is that the archive will still be able to identify articles where there are alternative spellings or errors, or indeed any OCR (Optical Character Recognition) problems that have occurred during the scanning process.

In 1847 *The Illustrated London News* ran a series of articles entitled “Flying Sheets from A Travelling Contributor” for an example see the 28 August 1847 issue. A ‘basic search’ for **travelling contributor** as a leading ‘keyword’ returns 8 entries, with 10 returns when searching the ‘entire document’. One of the additional documents is an addendum “To Correspondents” that that week’s edition of the “Travelling Contributor” had been cancelled due to restrictions on space, confirming the range of material the magazine was handling at this time. The second article on “Death of Schwanthaler, the Sculptor” directed readers to an earlier discussion of his work in the “Travelling Contributor” columns, though they were referred to solely as “Flying Sheets”. As magazines could and did change the title of articles, even regular features, this term, used as a search term returned 14 hits. Whilst one entry was not relevant,

there were three new editions of the “Travelling Contributor” column which had been omitted from the initial search due to spelling errors. A ‘fuzzy search’ would have eradicated this error, as, repeating the ‘basic search’ as an ‘advanced search’ with the ‘fuzzy’ set at ‘high’, returned the full series of **Travelling Contributor** articles, including those spelt ‘contributour’ and ‘contribtuor’. The entire series provides a crucial insight into how representations of travel were changing and demonstrate the distinctive blend of text and image for which *The Illustrated London News* was renowned. The column of Saturday, 16 October, 1847 particularly featured a series of images depicting “The Volks’ Feste, at Munich” and “Tyrolean and Bavarian Costumes”. Therefore, if researchers are to achieve the maximum from *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive*, they must familiarise themselves not only with the breadth of themes that may be addressed by a topic but also the full range of facilities that the archive offers.

Advanced Searches: The Supplement

As well as being able to search by contributor or specifically by year, through an ‘advanced search’ the archive offers researchers the opportunity to refine their parameters, both within the issue of the paper itself (advertising, arts and leisure, editorial and commentary, news and business or people) and by ‘Special Issue’. Supplements and souvenir editions continue to remain a rich yet relatively unexplored aspect of the Victorian periodical press (DeMoor, 2010). There were many varieties of supplements from seasonal specials to guides and commemorative issues. Their purpose was equally varied depending on the publication it accompanied; being, for example, a

means of raising revenue or, if free, an addendum to the paper or magazine where there was a surfeit of material to include in the standard issue (Brake, 2010). In *The Illustrated London News* many of the front pages for the supplements were dominated by a large image which was characteristic of the paper’s ‘brand’. The theme of ‘travel’ was a popular choice for leading a supplement, whether on a particular location or reviewing books on travel. Between April and November 1851 there were a series of supplementary editions specifically on the Great Exhibition. However, the lead of Saturday, 29 November’s supplement of 1851 was on “Oriental Travel”, topically responding to the interest in foreign cultures that had been further stimulated by the Exhibition. Covering two full pages with a large engraving of “A Street in Constantinople, With the Fountain and Mosque of Sultan Achmet” the feature was clearly written in the style of the increasingly popular travel guides such as those by Murray and Baedeker, addressing a distinct and discerning readership. In this way, the Supplements can be seen as a vital part of the identity of *The Illustrated London News*, moving its readership to include “collectors or connoisseurs”; the discerning readers of “fine art and high culture rather than Grub Street” (Brake, 2010, p.116).

Case Study: Thomas Cook

However, travel was not all about foreign destinations. Indeed, the humble origins of Thomas Cook, began with a chartered excursion to a regional prayer meeting in 1841. Four years later, the temperance leader, Mr Thomas Cook, chartered an excursion to the seashore at Liverpool; the first to be sponsored under the name that was to become synonymous with “travel for the

Millions". For, Cook's legacy was that he made travel accessible to more than just the privileged few. Writing at the time of "Thomas Cook and Son's Jubilee", Saturday, 25 July, 1891, *The Illustrated London News* declared "they have enabled the artisan and the poor clerk, the shopkeeper and the poor curate, the multitude of toilers to whom money is an object and change of scene a necessity, to leave the crowded city for the seaside or the mountain slope, where a holiday can be enjoyed and health regained or ensured". The success of Cook's tours was secured when Joseph Paxton and John Ellis, chairman of Midland Railway, approached Cook to organise excursions to the Crystal Palace, the Great Exhibition of 1851. So popular was the response that Cook went on to organise trips to the Dublin Exhibition in 1853 and his first Continental tour, the Paris Exhibition in 1855 (Withey, 1997). From these humble origins, Thomas Cook has continued to be a leading agent in the travel market; their brand and identity being able to be traced through the pages of *The Illustrated London News*.

Following the slumps and booms in demand that were created by the introduction of the aeroplane in the 1950s, *The Illustrated London News Historical Archive* provides a vital resource for understanding how these changes affected marketing within the industry. In an advert in the 31 December 1977 issue Thomas Cook can be seen to be working in partnership with Cunard advertising "The Great Pacific Cruise". In such an era of competition and economic uncertainty collaboration between companies ensured a quality of service provision and thus the survival of companies. Through into the 1980s Thomas Cook was offering a larger variety of holidays, appealing to a broader range

of markets for example see the 26 January, 1985 issue as the travel market diversified. By the 14 December 1992, the concept of luxury travel was significantly different from that originally advertised by the company in the 1840s. Playing on the historical traditions of "The Grand Tour" and the heritage of the company, Thomas Cook's advertisement promises an experience that "is Priceless". However, the lead price of £23,995 is aimed at a limited demographic and demonstrates the tensions that were created between price-led and product-led advertising in the 1990s.

Conclusion

The Victorians and Edwardians truly defined travel as a leisure activity for all, regardless of class, and their legacy lives on today. From Thomas Cook to Samuel Cunard, we can trace the journey of these great pioneers and many more through the pages of *The Illustrated London News*. This historical archive is rich in its rewards, but the user must be cautious of 'how' they are searching and ensure that they are fully familiar with the range of facilities that are on offer in order to maximise the potential of this fine resource.

FURTHER READING

Laurel Brake (2010) "Lost and Found: Serial Supplements in the Nineteenth Century" *Victorian Periodicals Review* (43:2)

Piers Brendon (1991) *Thomas Cook: 150 Years of Popular Tourism*

James Buzard (1993) *Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to 'Culture' 1800 - 1918*

Marysa DeMoor and Kate MacDonald (2010) "Finding and Defining the Victorian Supplement" *Victorian Periodicals Review* (43:2)

Lynne Withey (1997) *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: A History of Leisure Travel 1750 to 1915*

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