

About British Online Archives

British Online Archives (BOA) is one of the UK's leading academic publishers and online repositories. Hosting over six million records, carefully sourced from private and public archives, such as The National Archives (UK) and British Library, our unique primary source collections cover over 500 years of world history.

They boast extensive documentation from across the globe, providing invaluable source material for students, educators, and researchers working within a range of scholarly disciplines, including history, politics, sociology, and international relations. Our fascinating digital holdings offer insights into global historical events and trends, typically through a British lens. They serve to broaden our understanding of history, and help us to make sense of contemporary social, cultural, economic, and political landscapes.

Related Collections:

Our primary source collections are organised thematically so as to enhance user experience and boost discoverability. Via careful reflection on our archival holdings, and in dialogue with scholars, we have grouped our collections under key historical themes.

The Illustrated London News, 1842–2003, falls under the broad themes of “Culture and Society” and “Media and Communications”. You can explore related collections, such as *The Sketch*, 1893–1958, and *The Sphere*, 1900–1964, by scanning the QR code.



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The Illustrated London News, 1842–2003

The Illustrated London News, 1842–2003

Containing over 250,000 images, this fascinating and visually stunning collection brings together the extensive back catalogue of one of the most influential and successful publications in the history of British print media: *The Illustrated London News (ILN)*, founded in 1842 by Herbert Ingram.

The first edition of the *ILN*, which appeared on 14 May 1842, sold 26,000 copies. It cost sixpence, featured 32 illustrations, and reported upon the “Great Fire of Hamburg”, as well as the young Queen Victoria’s first “Masquerade Ball”. By 1855, 130,000 copies were being sold weekly, a figure that had more than doubled by the early 1860s. During the twentieth century, the *ILN* shed much of its early visual style as it embraced photography.

Due to its phenomenal success, the *ILN* soon faced serious competition from publications like *The Graphic*, founded in 1869 by William Luson Thomas. Over time, however, the *ILN* acquired a number of its rival publications, including *The Graphic*, and launched several successful papers of its own, such as *The Illustrated War News*.

Excitingly, the back catalogues of the *ILN* and its nine so-called “sister” titles are available to explore on BOA’s digital archive. These impressive resources enable students, researchers, and educators to investigate the history of modern Britain, and especially the history of British print journalism, in remarkable detail. Indeed, the *ILN* and its related publications facilitate examination of an almost endless variety of historical events, concepts, and trends—British and otherwise.

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“The publication of the first issue of the Illustrated London News on 14 May 1842 marked a revolution in the gathering and representation of news through its pioneering use of pictorial reportage.”

“Pageantry or Propaganda? The Illustrated London News and Royal Visitors in Ireland,” Margarita Cappock, Irish Arts Review Yearbook 16 (2000): 86–93.



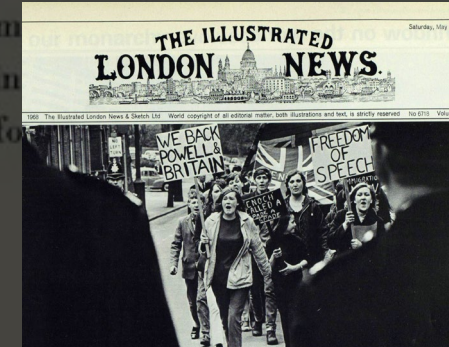
The *ILN* pioneered technological innovation. Publishing weekly illustrated news was demanding, but was made feasible by the advent of the steam press and the arrival of faster rotary presses in the 1840s. In 1860, the *ILN* was the first to publish illustrations produced by photographing onto woodblock. Under William Ingram (Herbert’s son), it moved from wood to process engraving. In 1900, the paper adopted the photogravure process, imbuing printed photographs with greater depth and a smoother tone.



The *ILN* captured significant cultural trends. It printed reviews of music, opera, and the theatre, as well as the works of influential authors. Celebrated artworks were often replicated by the paper’s illustrators.



Disasters and tragedies were a conspicuous feature of the *ILN*’s coverage. Industrial accidents, shipwrecks, and railway disasters were reported upon extensively. So too were natural disasters.



During the 1960s, the *ILN* frequently reported upon debates surrounding immigration. This article surveyed the influence of Enoch Powell’s controversial “Rivers of Blood” speech, delivered in Birmingham in April 1968.



Every issue of the *ILN* in this collection has been tagged by our skilled editorial team, making it easy to explore. You can search for key words, events, and individuals.

Coverage of global conflicts was a salient feature of the *ILN*. It reported upon practically every major overseas conflict throughout the mid to late-nineteenth century, such as the Crimean War (1853–56), the Franco-Prussian War (1870–71), the Afghan War (1878–79), and the First Boer War (1881). During the twentieth century, the *ILN* likewise paid close attention to major conflicts, such as the world wars, the destabilisation of the Middle East, the “Suez Crisis” of 1956, the Vietnam War (1954–75), and the “Troubles” that broke out in Northern Ireland in 1968.

The *ILN* celebrated Britain’s imperial reach—news of, and illustrations depicting, far-flung parts of the empire featured constantly. This collection allows you to track a large portion of Britain’s imperial history—from the Victorian heyday of the empire, through to its fragmentation during the twentieth century. It is likewise possible to explore the emergence of independence struggles and post-colonial movements, as well as the significant economic, political, and demographic trends that imperial retreat generated within the United Kingdom.



Sources include: Illustrated London News (ILN)