

# HOW THE VICTORIANS SAW THEMSELVES

**David Parker**

The Victorians lived in an age of contrasts. New technologies and international commerce were creating national confidence and vast wealth – but also sprawling unregulated towns and loud demands for political and social reform. The aristocracy reigned supreme on great estates, the Empire was steadily expanding, steam power was transforming land and sea transport, the growing middle classes were enjoying a host of leisure and sporting activities, and all the while the working classes struggled to make ends meet and their voices heard.

In many respects the Victorians were self-aware. Proud of their achievements, they also knew the price they were paying. Journals and newspapers ensured events, trends and conflicts, along with the editors' opinions, reached a wide audience – whether in readers' homes, clubs or workers' institutes. While the Victorians were accustomed to read lengthy articles in remarkably small print, with very rare exceptions there were no illustrations. Until 14 May 1842 that is – when the first edition of the *Illustrated London News (ILN)* appeared, and 'news' entered the modern world in which eye-catching pictures took pride of place and the main role of many commentaries was to help explain them. For the next fifty years, until the mass reproduction of photographs was sufficiently refined, the ILN employed highly skilled illustrators to bring their portrayals and interpretations of news items from across the world to each week's edition. It is a selection of these striking images – from weddings to workhouses, wars to royalty, and Ireland to China – that are the subject of this fascinating and ground-breaking book. Taken together with their sometimes critical, sometimes humorous, and frequently penetrating commentaries, they afford us a unique insight into the attitudes, aspirations and anxieties of our forbears – the Victorians.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

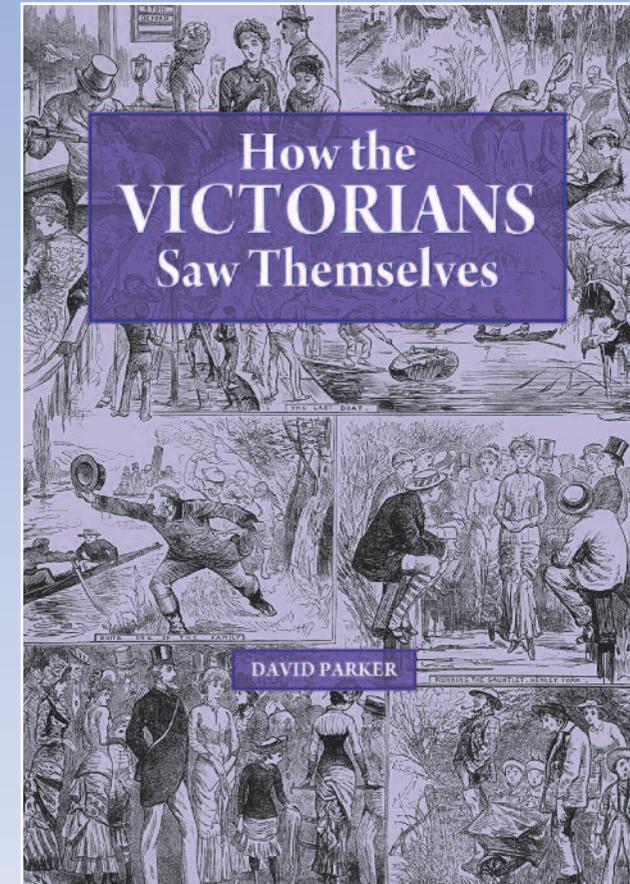
Dr David Parker was a headteacher and then UK and European Masters Programme Director in the University of Plymouth's Faculty of Arts & Education.

He has written eight other books and many scholarly and popular articles on nineteenth and twentieth century educational and social history. He has also contributed to a dozen BBC TV and Radio Devon programmes on First World War themes, and given many talks to local societies. David Parker and his wife live in Exeter and have two grown up children.

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Imprints: Halsgrove, Ryelands, Halstar, PIXZ Books & Halswood Journals. Halsgrove® is a registered trademark. Copyright© 2020

# HALSGROVE TITLE INFORMATION



**Format:** *Hardback, 160pp, 297x210mm, profusely illustrated in black and white*

**Price:** *£24.99*

**ISBN:** *978 0 85704 343 6*

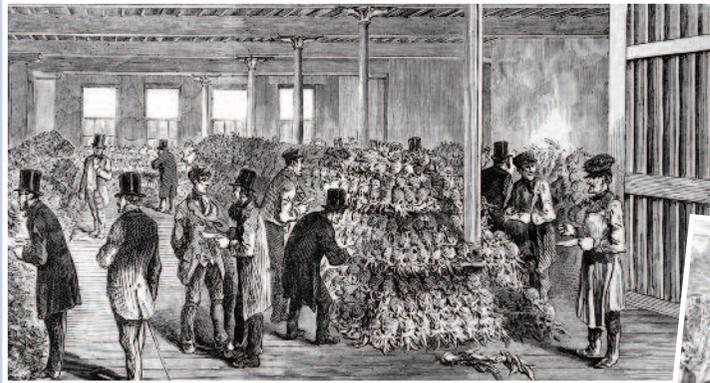
**Imprint:** *Halsgrove*

**Published:** *April 2020*

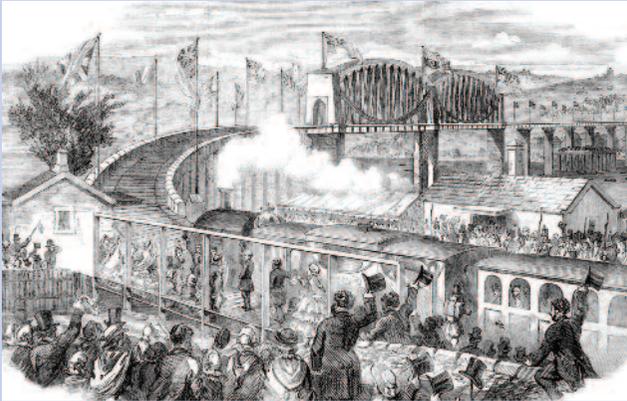


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Wellington, Somerset TA21 9PZ Tel: 01823 653777 Fax: 01823 216796  
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Imported pineapples in Adams & Company's Pudding Lane warehouse. (6 August 1853)



Above: 'Eight hours at the Sea-side' – Brighton beach. (10 May 1856)



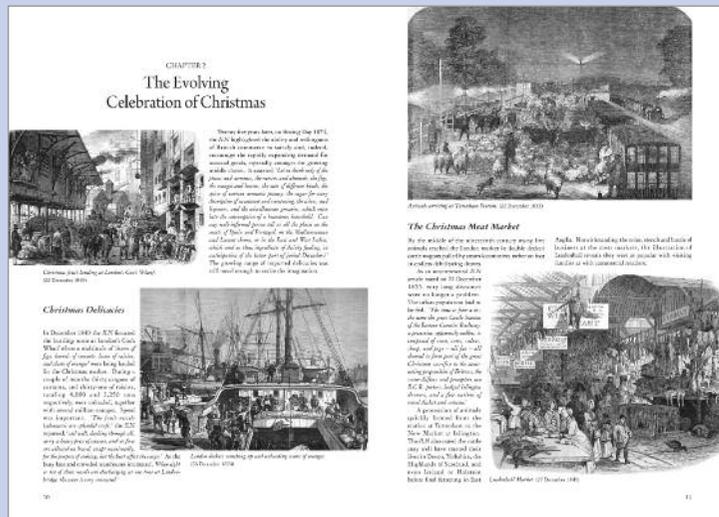
Left: Prince Albert at Saltash. (14 May 1859)

Left: All-England Croquet match at Wimbledon. (9 July 1870)

Below: Saturday afternoon in Victoria Park. (9 August 1890)



The newly arrived orang-utang. (28 June 1851)



Example of a double-page spread.

