

The Brown Family Adventure – seaside holidays in Kent in the mid-19th century.

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In 1847 John Leighton published a small cartoon book, taking a humorous look at a brief seaside holiday in Kent's foremost resort. It was the culmination of over half a century of comic writing that had used Margate as a means to explore the rich vein of comedy to be found in ~~newly-emerging~~newly emerging resorts and it poked gentle fun at the activities of a thoroughly-respectable middle-class family. It also offers an amusing picture of the range of people who were visiting the resort; a holiday was no longer restricted simply to the richest members of ~~society, but~~society but could be enjoyed by working people frolicking in the sea. In this paper the tale of the Brown family is used as a starting point for an examination of the growth of seaside resorts in Kent and the mechanics of mid-19th century seaside holidays. Means of transport, the nature of holidaymakers and the lifestyle of visitors while in Margate are examined by exploring Leighton's cartoon as well as a range of published literary sources and diaries.

Keywords : Margate, Kent, steamers, railways, population, cartoon, class

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Introduction

Compare a seaside holiday in 1800 with its equivalent in 1900 and the changes are obvious. The aristocratic, summer-long stay at the seaside had been transformed into the middle-class family holiday or the organised day-trip to the coast for factory workers. The arduous stagecoach trip, lasting hours or even days, had been replaced by the relative luxury and convenience of high-speed, steam railways, though it is unlikely that the term 'luxury' would have occurred to working-class families on cheap excursion tickets crammed into third-class carriages. By the end of the 19th century marauding hordes of day trippers had begun to drive genteel, middle-class holidaymakers from the beach into the more secluded parts of resorts or further west to beyond the reach of convenient, affordable railways.

Polite visitors in 1800 belonged to a small, exclusive group, the 'Company', who would socialise among themselves in what would have seemed like a well-regulated programme overseen by the Master of Ceremonies. They would stay in lodgings, perhaps taking a whole house for the duration of their stay. At the end of the 19th century, seaside entertainment was a more boisterous affair; new technology had provided visitors with the pier, electric lights and electric railways, and music hall provided livelier fare than more traditional theatre. Rooms were now available in houses to suit almost all pockets and wealthier visitors could enjoy some retreat from the melée of the seafront by staying in new Grand Hotels or hydropathic hotels, where their health and entertainment needs might be met without having to venture forth into the heart of the town. There is no single point between 1800 and 1900 where these changes in holidaymaking become apparent, but the 1840s lies at the heart of the transformation, and the Brown's family holiday provides evidence of the changes that were underway.

In 1847 John Leighton, using the pen-name Luke Limner, published *London Out of Town; or, the adventures of the Browns by the sea-side*, a small, humorous book about the Brown family going on a short, seaside holiday. This fictional account contains a wealth of information about the mechanics of holidays in the 1840s as well as portraying something of the atmosphere of a classic, if comic, middle-class holiday of the period. For historians it provides a snapshot of life as a holidaymaker in Margate, the resort of choice for thousands of visitors each year but also the butt of jokes by writers since it became a popular destination in the mid-18th century. Sea bathing had been taking place there at least since the 1730s, and by the 1760s its popularity had led to the creation of the first purpose-built entertainment facilities, the establishment of the first large square in a seaside resort for residents and visitors and the publication of its first guidebook. Its clientele consisted of a small number of aristocrats and members of the professions and gentry, but it was the lower middle classes, the London shopkeeper, and, even worse, working class visitors from the East End, who could visit because of cheap sailing boats running along the Thames, that made Margate a fertile target for humorous writers as far back as the 1770s. George Keate writing in 1779 recorded that: 'The progress of fashion hath not yet so swept from the walks of this place, that *diversity* I have been speaking of, but that there still are to be met with, many plain, unrefined characters, intermingled with the more polished crowd. The frequent *imports* and *exports* of the Hoys constantly maintained the inequality, and spread a more spacious canvass' (Keate, 1779, vol II, p. 103). In 1825 one guidebook writer extolled Margate's cheapness:

These luxuries, comforts, and blessings invite,
To the Margate Steam-Packets then haste with delight;
You may stay out a week, taste the pleasures all round,
And carry home change from a Note of Five Pound (Anon, 1825, p.12).

London Out of Town is the earliest illustrated publication that depicts the comical side of Margate's visitors and their naïve, seedy or even quasi-criminal behaviour while on holiday. This paper will use it as the starting point

for an examination of the realities of holidaying in Kent in the 1840s, as well as exploring the humour being found in the subject by contemporary writers. Leighton's book puts visual flesh on to the bones of a contemporary essay such as Charles Dickens' *The Tuggses at Ramsgate*, published in 1836, as well as diaries such as those written by William Fry (1826) and Daniel Benham (1829). In all these sources evidence can be found that the aristocratic Georgian stay at the seaside was evolving into the Victorian family holiday.

London Out of Town

The story of the Brown family's holiday is told in *London out of town, or, The adventures of the Browns at the sea side* by Luke Limner, a pseudonym of John Leighton (1822–1912), a celebrated artist and illustrator. This book is one of his earliest works, dating from 1847, with his greatest success belonging to the 1850s onwards (King, 2004). *London out of town* is a small book measuring only 144mm by 112mm and contains of sixteen pages of illustrations. A black and white copy exists in the British Library, but a coloured version exists in Bryn Mawr College in Pennsylvania (USA) (British Library 12352.a.3; Bryn Mawr College Library - Call Number - NC1479.L6 A3 1847).

Comic books were a 19th century invention, but they can ultimately trace their origins back to the ribald humour of the marginalia of manuscripts. Their more immediate origins can be found in the chapbooks of the 18th century, in the graphic sheets printed and sold at executions and in the prints produced during the first satire boom in the period from Hogarth to Rowlandson, Gilray and Cruickshank. By the 1820s a satire industry existed with a network of print shops producing and selling satirical and comic prints. Printing technology continued to improve and led to the production of popular, cheap magazines such as *Punch* in 1841, the *Illustrated London News* in 1842 and the so-called 'Penny-Dreadful' novels – serialised prose stories with accompanying pictures. These were succeeded by 'Penny-Dreadfullers' and

later the more wholesome boys-own and girls comics that many of us grew up with (Ashton, 1990; Sabin, 1993, pp. 14-17; Sabin, 2001, pp.11-13). The ~~colourfully-titled~~[colourfully titled](#) *Ally Sloper's Half Holiday*, published from 1884 for over 30 years, is generally acknowledged as the first comic in the modern sense, but Leighton's work already has many characteristics of its modern counterpart (Gifford, 1976, p.7; Bailey, 1998, p. 47; Bettley, 2001, pp. 126-7; Sabin, 2001, p. 15).

The most immediate and direct predecessor of Leighton's comic book lies in the work of the Swiss humorist Rudolphe Töpffer, whose comic strips of the 1830s were republished in English during the 1840s. Foremost among these was *Histoire de M. Jabot*, drawn in 1831 and published in 1833, but it was his later *Histoire de M. Vieux Bois* (also known as *Les Amours de M. Vieux Bois*), which was republished in English as the *The Adventures of Obadiah Oldbuck*, that seems to have had the greatest impact in England (Bettley, 2001, p. 124-5; Kunzle, 2007, p. xiii – xv). Different sources offer comparable, but slightly contradictory, dates of publication in Britain. The British Library catalogue dates its English publication to '1841?' while Cambridge University Library plumps for '1842'. Like many popular publications and guidebooks, dates were often omitted from a book to lengthen its shelf-life. Töpffer's early death in 1846 meant that he would never have had the pleasure of seeing Leighton's earliest comic works.

Leighton's book tells the story of a middle-class family in London who decide that the city is too hot and so they head for the seaside. Mr Brown is the director of a railway company, but after reading about a terrible accident in his newspaper, he decides to go by steamer. **Figure 1** After a hair-raising, high-speed coach trip through the streets of London they just make the departing steamship. Their river and sea journey is equally eventful, with the steamer's funnel hitting a bridge and further down the river conditions become rougher, leading to widespread sea-sickness. **Figures 2 and 3** During the voyage Miss Jemima Brown catches the eye of a 'gentleman in black', who claims to be the Honourable Major Smythe with hilarious consequences later in the story.

On their arrival at the resort they land via a rowing boat and set off in search of lodgings. **Figure 4** At the same time the 'gentleman in black' is met by two men, who apparently need to discuss business with him, and so he bids farewell to the family. In fact they appear to be law officers who, after questioning, release him on parole. The Browns eventually find accommodation in a house with fine views of the bone crushing mill and the railway line. However, through Mr Brown's telescope Miss Angelina Brown secures a glimpse of the sea where she sees a man in a boat, a woman using a bathing machine, 'a city drysalter from Pickle Herring Wharf in Brine', 'a party of water nymphs from Whitechapel at play' and a rude boy thumbing his nose at her. **Figure 5** In the house the Browns settle in while the resident family are relegated to the basement kitchen.

During their short holiday the family manage to cram in a lot of activities. On day two they go to the country for a picnic, but this is interrupted by an angry bull, a patch of nettles and a swarm of insects; they ride ~~donkeys, but~~ donkeys ~~but~~ are thrown by the uncooperative animals; they try archery but consistently miss the target. **Figure 6** In the evening they promenade on the pier where they encounter Major Smythe humming *Buffalo Girls*, a current minstrel song that proved popular even in polite circles (Pickering, 2008, p. 21). **Figure 7** Due to the rain on day three they stay in the ~~house, but~~ house ~~but~~ send for books from the circulating library. They are forced to 'enjoy' Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* and James Hervey's *Meditations among the Tombs* as all the new entertaining works have already been borrowed. **Figure 7** Mr Brown seeks solace in a bottle of contraband brandy while Major Smythe and the Brown's oldest son go out on the town, though Smythe runs off at 7pm and leaves Mr Brown to pay the bar bill. Smythe returns at 2am for a fresh round of carousing, making Mr Brown wonder what he did during the evening.

Day four centres on an adventure enjoyed by young Master Brown and on day five they finally get to the beach. Here there are bathing machines, donkey rides and to Miss Jemima Brown's consternation, an incoming tide that traps her until her hero, Major Smythe, rescues her. **Figure 8** After lunch

they go out to sea in a pleasure boat: clearly they had already forgotten the tribulations of the journey to the resort. **Figure 9** In the evening the family promenaded to the library where Mrs Brown wins a silver tobacco box in a raffle and the family enjoy a novelty dancer. The climax of the evening and the story is when they go to see a troupe of 'Ethiopian' serenaders, an original name for minstrels. Their evening would have been perfect if Major Smythe could have joined them. But suddenly they realise that he is there – he is the minstrel playing the banjo! The black mark on his face on day one was not soot from the steamer chimney, but some of his make-up that he had failed to remove. Shocked by the treachery of this impostor, the Browns have a fitful night's sleep before heading home early the next day by train.

The story may not be of the highest literary standard, and the central thread of Major Smythe's deception seems hardly sufficient to sustain a conventional short story. However, Leighton's inspiration seems to have been Charles Dickens' *The Tuggses at Ramsgate* published in 1836. They have a comparable storyline, with elements in common including the journey, lodgings, the beach activities and an underlying theme of deception. The escapades with donkeys, a raffle at the library, the motif of the telescope and the imagery of the absurdly distant 'sea views' from the lodgings all seem to prove that Leighton is borrowing heavily and condensing Dickens' story to fit his sixteen pages. In the remainder of this article the central themes of both stories, the travel to the resort and the experience of the family holiday will be discussed.

The Joys of Travelling to the Kent Seaside in the 1840s

Although the first railways had been established in the 1830s, it was the 1840s, and particularly the so-called railway boom of 1844-7, that began to establish a national railway system. During those years Parliament sanctioned the creation of 9,461 miles of new track, and between 1841 and 1851 the length of the operational network rose from 1,775 miles to 6,666 miles. The number of railway journeys increased even more dramatically, from

11,962,000 per year in 1841 to 79,740,000 a decade later. This was a period of economic prosperity with cheap credit stimulating investment in major infrastructure projects.

In 1847, the year of the Browns' holiday, there were 3,945 miles of track, and twenty-three resorts, or coastal towns that were soon to acquire a significant resort function, that could already boast a station (Butt, 1995; Crouzet, 1982, p. 284; Freeman, 1985, p. 20; Simmons, 1986, p. 225). The Brown Family preferred to take the steamer because of a recent railway accident that the father had read about in his newspaper, an event illustrated in the window behind him on page 1. **Figure 10** *The Times* in 1847 reported a bewildering range of railway accidents. Fifty-two reports, on thirty separate incidents, appear in the newspaper and in the previous year, fifty-five accounts are given of thirty-five incidents. A substantial number of these were fatal though none had the drama of the accident depicted in the cartoon.

Travelling by train was still dangerous in 1847, but accidents on steamers were not unknown and the cartoon shows that there were other challenges caused by travelling along the Thames! **Figure 3** On 2 July 1817 the Regent Steam Packet *en route* from London to Margate caught fire near Whitstable and was destroyed, though the passengers and crew were saved (Larn & Larn, 1995, vol 2, section 4; Sherwood, 2007, p. 113). This steamer ran twice a week and normally took eight to ten hours to complete the journey (*The Times*, Friday, June 13, 1817, p. 2). Compared to the hoys that had carried passengers along the Thames, these new steamers were faster and cheaper. 'A cockney' in 1823 praised the faster journey to Margate:

'deuced good things these steam-boats, beat the old hoys all to nothing – never shall forget being forty-eight hours, few years ago, with Mrs S and girls, in the Greyhound! – sure to get down in glorious time – found the deck crowded – all merry faces – few invalids – plenty of loose cash floating about – sure sign of the badness of the times' (A Cockney, 1823, p. 373).

The first steam packets had reduced the journey time to eight hours and by 1840 it had been shortened to six-and-a-half hours (Anon, 1822, p. 25; Lewis, 1840, vol III, p. 227). In 1825 a guidebook writer in finest doggerel could wax lyrically:

‘Full eighty-four miles, the whole distance between us
Takes only seven hours by the th’ Eclipse or the Venus;
While those who would glide in less time o’er the water,
By the Albion, or Dart, go in six and a quarter’ (Anon, 1825, p. 8).

In 1820 five steamers already plied the route along the Thames; the Eclipse left the Tower of London on Tuesdays and Saturday and departed from Margate on Monday and Thursday and the other four followed a similar pattern but on different days (Watts, 1820, p. 13). By 1827 there were ten steamboats running from London to Margate and between 1829 and 1846 twelve different companies were operating ships on the route (Clarke, 1975, 26; Whyman, 1981, pp. 124, 127; Whyman, 1985, p. 65). In 1763 hoys were able to carry 60-70 passengers and a guidebook in 1797 estimated that over 100 could be carried (Whyman, 1981, p. 117). In 1820 the London Engineer steam yacht transported 270 people, the capacity of three hoys and included among its passengers Lady Mary Coke who used it to return to London on 9 August (Whyman, 1981, p. 122; East Kent Archives, R/TR 2188/2). However, in the interest of profits some steamboats were dangerously overcrowded for trips along the Thames leading to stability problems; the 77-ton Fairy was reported to have carried 500 passengers on one occasion (Williams and Armstrong, 2005, p.34). The competition and the increasing size of the boats led to a significant decrease in fares and consequently a further widening of access to Margate. In 1815 the lowest fare on a hoy was 5s and on a steamer was 12s, but by 1835 they had fallen on steamboats to 7s for the best cabin and 6s for the fore cabin; a year later the fares had decreased to 5s and 4s respectively (Whyman, 1973, p. 155; Whyman, 1985, p. 25; Williams and Armstrong, 2005, p.27).

The journey was already being considered as part of the holiday in the 19th century. William Fry travelled to Margate in 1826 by coach, allowing him to visit and record buildings of interest in Rochester and Canterbury (Fry 1826-9, pp. 1, 2-4, 13ff). For his return he used the Royal Sovereign steamer: 'Left Margate this morning at 8 O Clock, when it was low water – so we were obliged to march to the end of the Jetty – all the Porters very busy with their Trucks, wheeling away our Trunks, Portmanteaus, Baskets, Bandboxes, Parasols, & Umbrellas to the Steam Packets' (Fry, 1826-9, pp. 67-8). The journey took seven hours during which entertainment was provided: 'To amuse us on our passage we had music, viz a Harp, Clarinet, & French Horn, they played a vast number of tunes, & among the rest, did not forget to play Rule Britannia & Cherry Ripe' (Fry, 1826-9, pp. 70-1). 'Backgammon tables, draught and chess boards' were provided on board some ships and 'a band of music constantly accompanies each vessel, to give hilarity to the scene' (Watts, 1820, p. 16). By the 1830s travellers could purchase pocket-sized guidebooks with illustrations to allow the identification of features on the two sides of the Thames as they sailed down the river. Among the small guidebooks (with far from pocket-size titles) ~~were:~~were William Kidd's *The Picturesque Pocket Companion to Margate, Ramsgate, Broadstairs & the parts adjacent*, published in 1831 and William Camden's *The Steam-Boat Pocket Book: a descriptive guide from London Bridge to Gravesend, Southend, the Nore, Herne Bay, Margate, and Ramsgate, etc* which appeared four years later. Although trips by coach and steamer may have been pleasurable, at least in parts, these methods of transport could not compete with the comfort, speed and reliability of railway travel. By the middle of the 19th century it was already obvious that the train was the future for transport and every resort that wished to thrive would need to be linked to the rapidly-growing national network.

The Growth of Resorts in Kent in the 1840s

The 1840s was a decade of change and rapid growth at seaside resorts, in terms of the physical fabric of the town as well as levels of population. Trying

to quantify physical expansion and growth is difficult in the absence of suitable, dated editions of reliable maps, though observation of housing in resorts provides an impression of this expansion. Census figures demonstrate that during this decade resorts grew particularly quickly compared to other types of town such as market towns, the populations of counties and the overall English population. And the census figures may not fully reflect the rapid growth of most resorts during the decade because of a change in the census date. The first census was carried out on 10 March 1801, but in the three succeeding decades it was held at the end of May and in 1841 it took place on 6-7 June. Part of the population of any resort would have been made up of visitors at this date, but with the return to a spring date in 1851 (30-31 March) fewer visitors would have been present. At Margate during the 1841 census enumerators marked the people recorded who were visiting the resort. Analysis reveals that there were 1,297 visitors and a resident population of 9,539 (Whyman, 1972, pp. 20, 35).

With this variation in the sampling date in mind, the growth in the first half of the 19th century, and particularly in the 1840s, is striking. Between 1801 and 1851, when both censuses took place in March before significant visitor numbers would inflate the figures for resorts, England's population doubled (8.9 million to 17.9 million) whereas the population of the leading resorts and coastal towns with resort functions almost trebled. Of the resorts established by the mid-18th century Scarborough grew by only 93% in 50 years, a reflection of its reasonably well-developed form in 1801. Margate grew by slightly more than the national average and the population of Kent, but Hastings grew from 3,175 to 17,621 in 50 years (455% increase) while Brighton's size increased from 7,339 to 65,569 (793%).

On the Kent coast there is a mixed picture concerning population growth. Over the first 50 years of the 19th century, the county's population increased by 99.5%, and Margate, the most established resort, grew by 112%. The population of newly-established Herne Bay, along with its original inland village, rose by 151% but from a low base in 1801, while Ramsgate in 1801 with 3,110 inhabitants had grown to 11,838 by 1851, a 281% increase.

Ramsgate is both a port and a resort, but an examination of the fabric of the town indicates that although the port may have contributed substantially to its economic prosperity, it was the resort function that had the most obvious impact on its expanding urban fabric. Two other Kent towns with port and resort functions exhibit less spectacular growth; both Dover and Folkestone doubled in size during the first half of the 19th century, broadly in line with the national and the county rate. Deal grew by only 30% during the same period, including two decades of significant contraction, which was the result of a localised depression following the end of the Napoleonic Wars (Whyman, 1969, p.122, 129-30). Unlike Ramsgate it does not have the large areas of resort development, but the presence and absence of large numbers of military personnel may explain its variable census figures.

How did this growth compare with the increase in the size of industrial towns? Accepting the caveat that most resorts started from a low base in 1801, their growth is nevertheless impressive and broadly comparable, and in some cases faster than, industrial towns in Lancashire, Yorkshire and in the Midlands. In the first half of the 19th century industrial towns grew by between 200% and 400%, a rate of growth similar to some of the faster developing resorts, though no industrial town could match Brighton's growth of almost 800%. Both resorts and industrial towns were growing markedly faster than the national average (102%), and much quicker than historic county towns, many of which expanded more slowly than the national average. Typically these seem to have increased between 60% and 135% (Mitchell, 1962, pp. 24-6).

If the figures for the 1840s alone are examined, the rapid pace of resort growth is even more evident. Between 1841 and 1851 England's population grew by 12.7% and Kent's by 12.3%. Despite the shift in the date of the census from June back to March, and therefore the loss of numbers of visitors from the 1851 census, most of the well-established resorts still showed a rapid growth during the decade; Scarborough grew by 28.5%, Brighton by 40.5% and Hastings by 49.5%. In Kent the position was different. Ramsgate grew by only 8.5%, Herne Bay by 1.7%, Deal by 5.6% and Dover by 9.3%.

However, the most interesting Kent figures are for Folkestone, which grew by 71% and Margate whose overall population dropped by 8.6%. In fact the resident population figures show a more complicated and a slightly more prolonged decline in the size of Margate (Whyman, 1972, pp. 35). In 1831 the town had 10,339 inhabitants; a decade later its population had fallen to 9,539 and in 1851 it had increased to 10,099 but declined to 10,019 in 1861. In the 1871 census, when the population was recorded as 13,903, Margate was back in line with the normal rate of seaside resort growth. This decline in Margate's population, or at least a feeling that the rate of increase had slowed, was observed by Robert Culverwell in 1850:

'Its fashion, its exclusiveness, and its peculiar advantages, have diminished, as that of all places do, with acquired celebrity and facility of access. Notwithstanding our population annually increases, other attractive places spring up, and competition, aided by railway travelling, forbid any vast accession, and take even the old Margate-goers away, and our little town lives and thrives only upon its share, instead of commanding, before and when steam-boats first essayed the journey, the monopoly it used to do' (Culverwell, 1850, pp. 74-5).

At least part of the explanation for the anomalous population figures is also contained within the Brown's seaside holiday adventure. Folkestone and Margate were dependent on their respective transport connections to London and the shift of emphasis to the train from the steamer is reflected in their populations. The station at Folkestone opened in 1843 and the town soon became established as a fashionable watering place on the growing route from London to Paris (Butt, 1995, p. 98, Mackie, 1883, p. 79). Although there had been modest resort functions prior to this, the railway provided the stimulus for new growth and this is reflected in the mid-19th century buildings in the town and on the seafront. In marked contrast, Margate initially suffered from the arrival of railways. Londoners were no longer forced to enjoy its charms because of the convenient steamer route along the Thames; now much of the southern English coast began to be open to the capital by the 1840s (Whyman, 1973, p.140-1). Brighton seems to have been particularly

popular with people using the new transport network. In 1837 stagecoaches are estimated to have brought 50,000 travellers to Brighton, but in a single week in 1850, less than a decade after its station opened, 73,000 people arrived by train (Walton, 1983, p. 22; Butt, 1995, p. 44). In the same period Brighton grew by over 40%; in 1801 it had been the 50th largest town in England, but by 1851 it had risen to 15th (Mitchell, 1962, pp. 24-7).

Daniel Benham, writing in the second quarter of the 19th century, records in detail his summer holidays in diaries for 1829, 1849, and 1852, though his destination in some other years is known from these survivals (Whyman, 1980; Palmer, 1943; Palmer, 1944). These diaries reveal a man who enjoyed recording the fine detail of his everyday life on holiday, a behavioural trait that befits the Secretary to the London Gaslight Company in Dorset Street at Salisbury Square (Kelly & Co, 1846, p. 103). In 1841 he lived at Pullins Row in Islington and by 1851 he had recently moved to 18 Regent Square in Bloomsbury where he occupied a large house in the south-west corner, which had been built in c 1829 (Survey of London, 1952, pp. 75-6). Numbers 1-17 survive, but frustratingly the rest of the square was rebuilt after the war. A solicitor John Barber had occupied the house between 1848 and 1850, and so in 1851 Benham was a relative newcomer to the square.

In 1826 and 1829 Benham visited Ramsgate, but in 1847 he went to Weymouth and in 1849 he enjoyed time at Ilfracombe and Weston-super-Mare. In 1852 he again visited Ilfracombe and other towns in Devon. In his 1829 diary he took the Magnet steamer to Margate where he changed on to a coach and on his return he used the City of London Steamboat from Ramsgate (Whyman, 1980, pp. 187, 205). In 1849 he employed the train from Paddington to get to Devon, while in 1852 he took a train to Swansea where he transferred to a steamer (Palmer, 1943, p. 212; Palmer, 1944, pp. 16-7). His diaries and investigations into his genealogy reveal that his choice of holiday destinations may have been governed by two factors. His home and its location in 1851 indicates a man who was increasingly prosperous and so he could afford to travel beyond Kent, but his diary also reveals that the

availability of fairly fast, comfortable and reliable trains to West Country resorts had opened them up as favoured destinations.

Life at the mid-19th-Century Kentish Seaside Resort

Although Leighton's aim was to entertain the reader through a host of amusing incidents, *London Out of Town* also serves as a record of the type of activities taking place at a contemporary resort, a series of everyday events that echo Dickens' short story of a decade earlier. Both the Browns and the Tuggses began their stay by scouring the resort to find rooms and the same technique was employed by Daniel Benham when he arrived at Ilfracombe on 28 July 1852. Benham left his daughter at an inn and set off to find lodgings:

'Leaving our dear Ann there we then perambulated the town in search of apartments and in about three hours we succeeded when we had sought in vain everywhere else, at Mr J. Widlake's No.3 Sea View Cottages, we did not however finally settle until we fetched Ann to see the place which we all found it convenient to approve inasmuch as it was the only one vacant of all we had seen except the one next door which was taken between our first and second visit to it. Ordered dinner - wrote home and getting our luggage from the Quay had a good wash &c' (Palmer, 1944, p. 217).

The Brown family ended in up in what seems to have been a fairly large house, a good distance inland with their only view of the sea being by means of father's new telescope. The cartoon suggests that on good days the family ate a hearty breakfast, spent the day out during which time they ate a picnic luncheon and then returned to their lodgings in the evening for a meal. One scene on page 10 shows the landlady of the house concerned about whether the wine had been watered down yet and hoping that all the sea air would disguise the cheapness of the ingredients.

A typical Georgian day at the seaside was very different to that of the 21st century. The day might begin with bathing, as most scientific writers of the Georgian period were clear that the most efficacious part of day for it was in the morning, before any food was consumed. For instance, Thomas Reid recommended that bathing should take place early in the day, before the sun had a deleterious effect on the sea and Dr Crane warned against a 'great depression of the spirits' if bathing took place later in the day (Reid, 1795, p. 8; Crane, 1795, p. 87). Lady Mary Coke, who visited Margate on at least three occasions in the 1780s, often bathed at 6am or 7am (East Kent Archives Service, R/TR 2188/2, 12 August 1780, 2 August 1783, 1 August 1788). William Fry, visiting Margate in August 1826, recorded in his diary that: 'Just before breakfast had a dip in the warm salt water Bath, the heat thereof 96 degrees, for the good of my Lumbago' (Fry, 1826-9, p. 36). These were presumably still baths on the seafront, somewhere on the Parade, as he then went on to describe the Clifton Baths that were at the time being hewn out of the nearby cliff:

'in the evening took a walk to the Fort, where they are now building some New salt-water Baths – called Clifton Baths which they are cutting out of solid Chalk Cliff, about 60 feet high from the Sea – at present it is in a very imperfect state, - notwithstanding the Workmen have been already employed on these subterraneous Excavations for more than 2 years, they are still going on with their laborious undertaking.'

After bathing, visitors returned to their lodgings for a hearty breakfast. Of course, not all visitors bathed or bathed everyday and many seem to have stayed in bed or went for walks early in the morning. Although the time of meals changed during the 18th and 19th centuries, breakfast for most people at leisure seems to have taken place around 9am or 10am (Palmer, 1984, pp. 10, 26; Scarfe, 1988, p. 21). The next meal was dinner, which occurred in the late afternoon or early evening. In 1780 it usually took place between 3pm and 5pm, but by 1810 it might be as late as 6pm, followed by a tea and/or

supper before bed. Richard Fowke on holiday at Freiston Shore in Lincolnshire in 1805 recorded his typical day:

'We had tea and coffee breakfast half-past eight o'clock, and a very nice dinner of all the varieties in season at two, and tea at half-past five, and a hot supper of dainties and nicnacs, at half-past eight. We also had a luncheon at ten if we had mind to eat, for you must understand after drinking so much of Neptune's Ale we are as hungry as hawks, and eat like plough boys and thackers, for we have no mercy on cold beef and pies, and drink like fishes' (Tower, 1871-4, p. 367).

By 1830, with the growth of luncheon as a separate meal rather than just a snack, dinner began to be taken at about 8pm, though some people still referred to it as supper (Palmer, 1984, pp. 12, 36, 59; Scarfe, 1988, pp. 21-2).

At the seaside the time between breakfast and dinner was spent in activities on or around the beach or socialising in inns, taverns and coffee houses, and, if a subscription was paid, in circulating libraries and assembly rooms. After dinner people went to the theatre or returned to take part in a new round of events in the libraries and assembly rooms. As well as these formal entertainments, there were also many more informal activities to occupy the day, including spending time on the beach, enjoying trips into the countryside and promenading, all of which were indulged in by the Browns. Culverwell writing in 1850 described a typical day at Margate, a day that still strongly resembled a Georgian day at the seaside:

'Bathing of any kind is always best resorted to in the early part of the day, especially if taken medicinally, and at other times remembering it to be more or less exhaustive, it is certainly inconsiderate to defer it till our bodily energy has left us, and we need repose. For special purposes there are exceptions, and time come, time serve. The middle period of the day is the happiest for lounging, sun worshipping, sand sauntering, sailing, riding, or driving, taking all things easily; the

afternoon or cool of the evening for promenading, recreating, strolling, and the mind will not suffer even if it give way to the amusements ever provided at a well-frequented watering-place' (Culverwell, 1850, pp.75-6).

Although there might appear to be a lot to do, soon the seaside holiday could become monotonous. In the Georgian period the aristocracy decamped from their London homes or country houses to lodge at the seaside, often for weeks or even months. The Brown's holiday of five days, curtailed by the shock of Major Smythe's double life, is more typical of the middle class holidays of the Victorian period and very different to the Tuggses' stay at Ramsgate which lasted six weeks and degenerated into monotony: 'Thus passed the evening; thus passed the days and evenings of the Tuggses, and the Waterses, for six weeks. Sands in the morning—donkeys at noon—pier in the afternoon—library at night—and the same people everywhere' (Slater, 1996, p. 341). A similar monotony also appears in Mary Figgins' short diary of her holiday in Margate in c 1828 (East Kent Archives, R/U127/1). Her daily routine, by modern standards, would be considered dull. It included buying food at the market in the morning, walks, and visits to bazaars and libraries. In the evening she enjoyed music, card games and entering raffles in the bazaars. On Sundays she attended church though by the third Sunday at Margate she seems to have become so relaxed that she could not get up in time for the morning service, a neglect made easier by the absence of her neighbours at home scrutinising her behaviour (Walton, 2001, 181). William Fry arrived at Margate on 22 August 1826, and on the following day the highlight was a visit to the pier (Fry, 1826-9, p. 34-5). On 24 August he bathed in the morning and later observed that: 'Margate is very full of Company, Bathing, Easting, Drinking, Sailing, Riding in Donkey Chariots, Singing, Dancing, Playing on Piano fortes, Raffling with Dice, and Card Loo – are all The Go down here' (Fry, 1826-9, p. 36). On the 26th he 'Went to see the Cosmorama, containing some good Views, those I most admired were Athens – the interior of St Mark's Church at Venice - & the Palais Royal at Paris' (Fry, 1826-9, p. 38-9). On Sunday 27 August he attended church 'to hear a Charity Sermon for the benefit of The Sea Bathing Infirmary, for the Cure of the poor,

who are afflicted with Scrofulous Complaints – in this Establishment a Reservoir has been made above the Ceiling of the ground story, which contains 5,000 gallons of sea water’ (Fry 1826-9, p. 39-40). Although Fry had waxed lyrically about all the activities going on in Margate, he soon seems to have exhausted its pleasures, as by the second week of his holiday he was visiting Ramsgate and Kingsgate, as well as going on a sailing trip (Fry, 1826-9, pp. 42-3, 44-58, 61). On Sunday 3 September he again attended church, but the high point of his holiday came on Monday 4 September, if the length of his description is an indicator of its significance, when he went to see a ‘Learned Newfoundland Dog’ that could do card tricks:

‘Went to see a Learned Newfoundland Dog, being much talked about at Margate – he performed many wonderful Exploits on the Cards, they were placed in a circular form, on the carpet of the room – his Master said to the Dog – you see the ten of Diamonds – now – what Card will you play to beat it? – the Dog walked around the Cards, & in his mouth took up the Knave of Diamonds & carried it to his Master – the Dog told how many Ladies were in the room – how many wore blue shawls, & how many wore yellow – How many Gentlemen wore Hair Powder – He was told to go to the Gentleman who used an Eye Glass – the Dog came to me’ (Fry, 1826-9, p.66)

Contented, the following day he left Margate by steamer to return to London (Fry, 1826-9, pp. 67-71).

The Brown’s holiday appears superficially similar to that of their aristocratic, Georgian forebears, but there were already a couple of innovations that would become significant elements in later holidays. The first concerns the pier on which they promenaded. Margate had a ‘pier’ that was rebuilt in 1810-5, but this was the arm of the harbour. Jarvis’ Jetty, a 1,186ft (356m) long wooden structure, was built in 1824 beside the pier to allow steamers to land passengers, in theory, at any tide and the cast-iron Victorian pier was opened in 1855, the first of Eugenius Birch’s (1818-1884) designs (Barker et al, 2007, pp. 26, 42.). In August 1826 William Fry walked on Jarvis’ Jetty: ‘After

breakfast I took a walk on the jetty, over the Entrance is Jarvis's Landing Place – this Jetty is 1,062 feet long, projecting into the Sea' (Fry, 1826-9, p. 34). The wooden structure had holes in its floor to prevent waves from bursting the structure and 'this floor is supported by strong beams of timber driven into the shore'. At low tide 'it is quite a favorite promenade, but at high water the Sea washes all over it.' The jetty was a leading place of entertainment for visitors: 'When the Company are walking on the Jetty, the Margate-Orpheus serenades them with Tunes on a Violin of his own manufacture, & he plays very well indeed, his infirmity of body renders him incapable of getting a laborious living but his agility of arm, and contentedness of mind have strong claims upon those who have an ear for music & a heart for pity' (Fry, 1826-9, p. 35). In an 1831 poem celebrating Margate the author recorded the scene on arrival at the jetty and found 'Margate Orpheus' still in place:

XXII

'Ring, ding, ding, dong! oh yes! oh yes!
Old *Philpot*, I declare,
A boosey little man I guess,
With quite an *empt-pot* air.

XXIII

Near him sits 'Margate Orpheus' lame,
The breeze his grey locks fanning;
Like other Minstrels I could name,
His *feet* will not bear *scanning*' (Anon, 1831, p. 12)

The Brown family might have walked along either the early 19th-century harbour arm or Jarvis' Jetty, though the latter was probably a more pleasant experience than the pier where cargo and fish were loaded and unloaded. Both were largely functional structures; in 1847 Brighton was the only resort where a pier had been built with promenaders specifically in mind, and the idea of the fully-developed pleasure pier with its own entertainments had not yet been invented. By the end of the 19th century every resort of any status

could boast at least one pleasure pier, and they were often at the heart of the Victorian seaside resort where once the trinity of the circulating library, assembly rooms and theatre had dominated the aristocratic Georgian holiday.

Another new feature of the Browns' holiday was the minstrel show that marks the climax of the story. It appears alongside the well-established pleasures of a raffle at the circulating library and the minuet danced by Baron von Humbug, the types of entertainment that the small number of visitors to a Georgian resort would have enjoyed. The minstrel show seems to mark a symbolic change in the type of entertainment being provided. Black-faced performers and black American performers both arrived in London in the 1830s and 'Ethiopian' performers had appeared at the seaside by the 1840s (Pickering, 1986, p. 70; Pickering, 2008, p.1; Toll, 1974, p. 196). The first of these performers were solo artists, and echoed a longer native tradition of stage acts or actors mimicking African characters, but by 1843 the minstrel troupe, as depicted by Leighton, was first appearing on British stages (Pickering, 2008, pp5-7, 13). The mid-19th century was the period when the Music Hall was evolving into an independent art form, but there was felt to be a certain vulgarity about these new types of entertainment. Even as late as 1872 *Westward Ho!* boasted that visitors would never be 'annoyed by the vulgar discordant songs of Ethiopian serenaders' (Horn, 1999, p. 137). However, while music hall was not felt to be respectable, the minstrel show by the end of the 19th century seems to have gained a reputation for being a decent and proper form of entertainment (Pickering, 2008, p.5, 24). Minstrels remained a prominent feature of resorts until the beginning of the 20th century when an invasion of Pierrots drove them from the beaches and music halls.

Humour and Class in Margate

In Leighton's cartoon book the Brown family visit an unnamed resort along the Thames, but the book and a tradition of seaside humour confirms that Margate was the target for his wit. In the story the destination could be reached by rail or by steamer, and when the family arrived they disembarked

by boat, as if there was no pier or harbour to land at. However, later in the cartoon they are shown promenading along a pier. Margate and Ramsgate were both served by railways in 1847 and both had a jetty or harbour (Butt, 1995, pp. 155, 194). However, despite having Jarvis' Jetty, visitors to Margate at high and low tides still had to use rowing boats on occasion to reach the shore: 'The Jetty, too, is in turn in true request; at high water submerged, impassable, unseen; at low, "dry as a chip," safe as a rock, and crowded like a fair' (Culverwell, 1850, p. 75).

Margate is most likely to have been the Brown family's destination as it was the largest and liveliest resort on the Thames, possibly with the exception of Gravesend, though this was more often a day-trip destination rather than a place for a holiday. Margate is also the resort most likely to have the spectrum of visitors that was depicted in the cartoon and the range of facilities, as well as the hint of seediness. It could also boast a number of industrial activities near the centre of the resort including a brewery and a gasworks. One contemporary guidebook even included an engraving and description of the new gasometer as they felt it was a place worthy of a visit: 'The gasometer is a neat and elegant building, situate in the Dane, built after a Grecian model, and erected in 1824, at which period Margate was first lighted with gas' (Kidd, 1831, p. 66).

Margate is also the most likely candidate as by the 1840s it was already a target for comic writers; it had become a byword for all that was risible in the English seaside and its visitors, particularly the working class visitors who were aping their wealthier fellow holidaymakers. Authors as far back as the late 18th century had mocked the type of people who visited Margate; the constant theme is that the ease of access from London allowed people to visit Margate who could not have afforded the journey to other resorts. The town's first guidebook in 1763 stated that: 'The Hoy, like the Grave, confounds all distinctions: High and Low, Rich and Poor, Sick and Sound, are here indiscriminately blended together' (Anon, 1763, p. 15). George Carey, who always sought to expose the comic in his writings took this idea further:

The hoys are a kind of small, much-crowded, and moving jails; the Captain, as *he is called*, and his men, generally assimilate much in their manners, and in their language, to the keepers of Newgate, and other places of confinement about London; and the passengers often, from the time they set sail from Billingsgate till they arrive at Margate, feel themselves under the same state of injunction as those unfortunate creatures who are kept under lock and key in the aforementioned places of confinement, and generally meet with as little degree of respect' (Carey 1799, p. 35).

From the 1770s comic writers mocked the people who were visiting Margate. In 1778 the anonymous author of the *Letters of Momus* noted that: 'The company here is divided, as usual, into people of fashion; people of fortune and of genteel professions; and a rabble, consisting, as it may happen, of rich and poor' (Anon, 1778, p. 11). In the following year George Keate poked fun at the collision between the rural local and the lower middle-class tradesman from London:

'The decent tradesman slips from town for his half crown, and strolls up and down the Parade as much at his ease as he treads his own shop.

His wife, who perhaps never eloped so far from the metropolis before, stares with wonder at the many new objects which surround her, ...

The farmer's rosy-cheeked daughter crosses the island on her pillion, impatient to peep at the LONDON females – Do but observe, Madam, with what astonishment they glance at one another, as if they had mutually seen their antipodes.

The LONDONER views with a disdainful surprise, the awkward straw hat, and exposed ruddy countenance of the rustic nymph; who in her turn, scrutinizes the inexplicable coiffure of her criticiser, unable to conceive what can have befallen the features of a face of which the nose is the only visible sign' (Keate 1779, vol I, pp. 104-5).

A similarly-snobbish tone was adopted in an 1833 magazine that described a visit to Margate. Echoing the often-repeated observation that the quality of accommodation on hoys was equally uncomfortable for everyone, the anonymous author noted how on a trip on a steamer: 'There too all are equals; the absence of the chilling sneer of the great allows the young apprentice to relax from his stiffness'. On arrival there was no room for class divisions:

'Here, if thy name be of gentle note, sink it, and become a Hobson or a Smith; affect no superiority; flirt and dance and laugh thy fill, and never wilt thou find thy time less heavily employed. Here what motley affluence of character, what vast miscellany of humours, greet thy observing but quiet gaze! Here mayest thou find materials, ay, and adventure too, for fifty novels and five hundred plays! Whose vein shall the critics justly declare to be exhausted while Margate opens her arms to all the varieties of the most variegated classes? And beautiful is it to the philanthropist, as well as the gallant or the observer, to behold trade thus throwing off its cares, and the reserve of the mercantile respectability blowing merrily about in the gay breezes of the pier'(Anon 1833, p. 444).

In the July 1850 edition of *Leisure Moments*, described as 'A Monthly Serial of Popular, Domestic, Recreative, Philosophical, and Hygienic Literature', there is a lengthy description of Margate. The author, Robert Culverwell begins by establishing the class of visitor to be found there:

'By the holiday people, I do not mean the coroneted and aristocratic portion, who avoid the multitude, and patronise only when their own clique assemble, I mean that plebeian race of weather-worshipers, that take their children, and their daughters, and themselves to ramble on the sands, to sniff the sea-weed, and inhale the sea breath, and to lounge in idleness in gain of healthful and rosy-looking cheeks, and comfortable and joyous feelings'(Culverwell, 1850, p. 73).

Culverwell went on to say that:

'Margate is by no means proud; it cannot be called an upstart place, nor is there any great aping of fashion about it. It is notoriously the resort of the middle but intelligent, the industrious but honest, the economic but benevolent class of the community. Although the "Browns," and the "Smiths," and the "Jones" may preponderate, there is as much good breeding, as much politeness and amiability, and as much money spent for the good of the place, as by the noblesse and the rich in the most notoriously fashionable rendezvous in any quarter of our island' (Culverwell, 1850, p. 76).

Dickens succinctly described the difficult choice that faced the Tuggs family when they were choosing their holiday destination a few years earlier:

'The question then arose, Where should they go?

'Gravesend?' mildly suggested Mr. Joseph Tuggs. The idea was unanimously scouted. Gravesend was low.

'Margate?' insinuated Mrs. Tuggs. Worse and worse—nobody there, but tradespeople.

'Brighton?' Mr. Cymon Tuggs opposed an insurmountable objection. All the coaches had been upset, in turn, within the last three weeks; each coach had averaged two passengers killed, and six wounded; and, in every case, the newspapers had distinctly understood that 'no blame whatever was attributable to the coachman.'

'Ramsgate?' ejaculated Mr. Cymon, thoughtfully. To be sure; how stupid they must have been, not to have thought of that before! Ramsgate was just the place of all others' (Slater, 1996, p. 330).

Dickens made comparisons between Kent's resorts, but many writers poked fun at Margate by comparing its visitors to those gracing Brighton. However, even before the Prince Regent had made Brighton the heart of the social world during the summer, Margate was being subjected in 1778 to a biting attack by the anonymous author of the *Letters of Momus*: 'Margate is furnished with dispositions of a humbler cast; such as might enter into the composition of a country squire, or rather a city alderman. Pride of riches united with sufficient ignorance; expence and dissipation without taste or pleasure; reserve and distance without importance and dignity; and a very little debauchery, gallantry, or love' (Anon, 1778, p. 2).

Leighton's cartoon book finds a rich vein of humour in the issue of class at his resort. He depicts, in unflattering terms, the 'party of water nymphs from Whitechapel' as two sour-faced, plump women splashing in the sea. Other comic writers targeted the eastenders who came to Margate; an 1831 poem described 'The Aldgate Aristocracy – the fashion of Fleet Street', while the anonymous author of 1833 described how: 'such pretty gay-dressed lasses escaped from Aldgate' to 'glance, giggle, laugh and coquet around' (Anon, 1831, p. 22; Anon, 1833, p. 444). **FIGURE 5** This type of visitor was portrayed by Leighton as being in marked contrast to what the Brown family believed to be their more refined and delicate manners, offended even by the disreputable profession of Major Smythe. The steamer first and now the railway were extending the 'habit of enjoyment' to a much wider section of society, to the discomfort of the Browns (Bailey, 1998, p.16). They probably led a relatively-cosseted middle-class life at home where their daily routine kept them from witnessing the indelicacies of their fellow city-dwellers, something that they could not avoid when on holiday (Walton, 2001, 180). At the resort they could not easily escape from mixing with the new influxes of working people, a phenomenon that would transform resorts, effectively taking them 'down market' through the introduction of cheap, popular entertainments and places to eat that could be afforded by poorer visitors (Williams and Armstrong, 2005, p32; Shields, 1992, p.85). These invasions would also lead to the counter-effect of the large hotel and hydropathic hotel being introduced in the middle years of the 19th century as a retreat from the sights, sounds

and crowds of the beach, and perhaps particularly the children who were transforming the invalid's bathing place into their playground (Shields, 1992, p.81; Brodie and Winter, 2007, pp. 108-9, 164-7).

The diverse nature of the visitors to Margate was revealed in the 1841 census. Of the 601 visitors whose profession or source of income was recorded, 352 were of independent means with the next largest group being servants and governesses, many of whom were probably in attendance to those with independent wealth. It is unclear precisely where Mr Brown would have been classified in this scheme, but as the director of a railway company he might have been in the small categories of Merchant or Professional, both of which accounted for fewer than 5% of the visitors at the resort. The full breakdown of the visitors in 1841 was as follows:

	Number	%
Independent	352	58.57
Servant and governess	89	14.81
Tradespeople	70	11.65
Merchant, dealer, factor	25	4.16
Professional, other than legal	16	2.66
Legal profession	11	1.83
Engineer and mechanic	10	1.66
Manufacturer or maker	7	1.16
Clerk	7	1.16
Armed Services	5	0.83
Farming	5	0.83
Church	4	0.67
TOTAL	601	100.00

(Whyman, 1972, p.27)

The makeup of the visitors to Margate reflects the catchment area of the resort; the 1841 census showed that 10% (128 of the 1,265 recorded) came

from Kent but 85.5% (1,028) came from another county, probably London. A similar analysis of Blackpool's clientele in 1841 revealed a smaller number of people of independent means but almost 30% of its visitors were involved with manufacturing, as befits a resort within reach of the industrial towns of Lancashire (Walton and McGloin 1979, p. 324). This study included a reworking of Whyman's original analysis, the most significant change being a reduction in the number of people of independent means from 58.57% to 44.8%, though it still represented a large part of Margate's clientele. In Margate the revised figures showed almost a quarter of the visitors came from the retail sector; this is 'the decent tradesman' from London who strolled 'up and down the Parade as much at his ease as he treads his own shop' (Keate 1779, vol I, p. 104). Keate describing the return to London described the same kinds of people in the 'cargo' on a hoy as far back as the 1770s: 'It consisted of a few gentlemen, who, like myself, enjoyed a passage by sea; - some decent shopkeepers, and their wives, who had been washing off the summer dust of London, - and the remainder chiefly composed of the servants of families, that had left Margate' (Keate 1779, vol II, pp. 200-1). In 1778 the Master of ceremonies was even accused of: 'a strange predilection for haberdashers, mantua-makers, and milliners, and [he] takes every opportunity of setting them above the wife or daughter of a merchant who hath left off trade; of a quack-doctor; of a dentist; of a Lincoln's-Inn lawyer; of a doctor in divinity, or a member of Parliament' (Anon, 1778, p. 2).

Conclusion

The 1840s was a momentous decade in England. After decades of largely unregulated expansion, a plethora of Factory Acts and Railway Acts strengthened the process of regulation of the Industrial Revolution while the repeal of the Corn Laws and the Navigation Acts marked attempts to strengthen the economy and move away from protectionism. The Penny Post introduced improved communications in 1840 while in 1844 the Bank Charter Act linked the issue of bank notes to gold reserves and the Companies Act enforced registration of companies. This was a decade of modernisation for

the British economy and its infrastructure, including the first Public Health Act in 1848, but there were also major challenges in the form of an epidemic of cholera in the same year, an economic slump at the end of the decade, poor harvests and an outbreak of potato blight leading to famine in Ireland. On the continent 1848 was the year of revolution, beginning in France and spreading through much of Europe, while Britain saw the publication of the Communist Manifesto and the culmination of the Chartist movement. Chartism, in combination with the modest electoral reforms of the 1832 Reform Act, are often described as safety valves for revolutionary ferment, allowing the working class and middle class means to express their dissatisfaction through non-violent, non-revolutionary means.

In a sense the seaside might be seen as a third means for some people to relieve political steam. Instead of throwing up barricades, people happily bundled themselves into trains and steamers to head for the seaside to enjoy leisure time, and this was no longer restricted to the aristocracy and the middle classes. The seaside holiday experience depended on an individual's income, but it was nevertheless a shared experience, much as going to the theatre was with its graded seating prices or sharing a train with its three classes of seat. Leighton in comic terms depicted something of this shared experience and he was already showing how the once exclusive institutions of the aristocratic Georgian holiday at the seaside were evolving in the middle of the 19th century towards mass entertainment. He also showed how mass transport was already affecting the character of seaside holidays and democratising access to the coast. The steamer first, and later the railway, were perhaps as important to the enfranchisement of the masses as any timid reform act, and by providing affordable access to recreation at the seaside they could be said to be as successful in the creation of a prosperous, stable, bourgeois democracy in Britain as any raft of political or commercial regulations.

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