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**The very model of a modern travel agency?  
The Polytechnic Touring Association 1888-1962**

**Neil Matthews**

Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities

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**THE VERY MODEL OF A MODERN TRAVEL AGENCY?  
THE POLYTECHNIC TOURING ASSOCIATION 1888-1962**

NEIL MATTHEWS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements of the University of Westminster  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## Abstract

This thesis provides an original contribution to the history of modern British travel and tourism, in the form of the first full-length analysis of the Polytechnic Touring Association (PTA). It seeks to establish whether the PTA was distinctive among contemporary travel agencies; whether it was successful; and in what senses it might be considered as 'modern'. Apart from Thomas Cook, virtually no modern British travel agency has been the subject of detailed historical investigation.

Beginning with an examination of the PTA's late Victorian origins in its parent institution, Quintin Hogg's Polytechnic, the thesis contextualises both organisations within a wider history of leisure, with specific reference to 'rational recreation' and respectability. Using Polytechnic records and comparative material from other emerging travel agencies, it builds a profile of the early PTA's operations including the key managers and staff members, the finances and the evolving portfolio of UK and foreign destinations. It considers accounts of Polytechnic/PTA tours from the inhouse magazine, again in conjunction with comparative material from other agencies, situating those accounts in the context of postcolonial theories relating to travel writing, in particular Orientalism and anti-conquest. Finally, it traces the PTA's history as a privately owned company between 1911 and 1962, siting the company within historiographical debates on modernity.

The overall conclusion is that the PTA was a distinctive, significant and successful player in the growing British travel and tourism industry. While other travel agencies had 'rational recreational' and educational origins, the PTA was distinctive in terms of the numbers of tourists for whom it catered and the balance of its portfolio. Polytechnic/PTA travel accounts up to 1911, considered as a body of writing, formed an ideology of 'collective Continentalism' which represented aspects of modernity. Their emphasis on simple fun and enjoyment suggested a degree of willingness to edge close to the boundaries of respectability while on holiday. After its change of status in 1911, the PTA became an effective adaptor to changing economic and social conditions – if not the pioneer it claimed to be, in emulation of the Polytechnic. By its latter days in the 1950s, now known as Poly Travel, it was a sizeable and well-respected firm, though not as modern – in the sense of being new and innovative – as perhaps it had been in its early years.

# Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Author's declaration	5
Abbreviated references	6
Chapter 1: Introduction	7
Chapter 2: The origins of the PTA	39
Chapter 3: Growth, diversification, scrutiny, debate	72
Chapter 4: Values and value for money	99
Chapter 5: Representations of abroad in travel accounts	130
Chapter 6: From independence to acquisition	163
Chapter 7: Conclusion	196
Bibliography	204
<b>Tables</b>	
Table 1: Continental and general tours account, 1902-1911	125
Table 2: Cruises account, 1902-1911	126
Table 3: PTA profits and donations to the Polytechnic, 1895-1911	127
Table 4: PTA donations to the Polytechnic, 1921-1939	175
Table 5: Principal destinations for PTA bookings, 1955-1956	189
Table 6: Press advertising 1 <sup>st</sup> quarters 1953-1955 by PTA <i>et al</i>	190

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Finally, I would have been unable to start this research, or to complete it, without the encouragement and support of my wife Helen.

## Author's declaration

I declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Abbreviated references

The following references appear in the body of the thesis or in the footnotes. In general, book or article titles are used in full for the first citation and in abbreviated form for further citations.

ABTA	Association of British Travel Agents
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BEA	British European Airways
BL	British Library
BMRB	British Market Research Bureau
BOAC	British Overseas Airways Corporation
BTA	British Travel Association
CAC	Churchill Archives Centres, Cambridge
CBS	Centre for Buckinghamshire Studies
CHA	Co-operative Holidays Association
CPF	City Parochial Foundation
CSCA	Civil Service Clerical Association
CTAC	Creative Tourist Agents Conference
HAT	History of Advertising Trust
HF	Holiday Fellowship
IATA	International Air Transport Association
ITA	Institute of Travel Agents
JWT	J Walter Thompson
LCC	London County Council
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
NALGO	National Association for Local Government Officers
NHRU	National Home Reading Union
NLS	National Library of Scotland
PCL	Polytechnic of Central London
PTA	Polytechnic Touring Association
RGS	Royal Geographical Society
RSP	Regent Street Polytechnic
RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
SAL	Staatsarchiv Luzern, Switzerland
UWA	University of Westminster Archives
WTA	Workers' Travel Association
YHA	Youth Hostels Association
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association
YMCI	Young Men's Christian Institute
YWCI	Young Women's Christian Institute

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Overview

Some events without a central element are described as ‘*Hamlet* without the prince’; the historiography of modern British travel and tourism might merit the epithet ‘*Hamlet* without the supporting cast’. While the groundbreaking work of Thomas Cook and the fortunes of the firm he created have attracted much attention, other travel firms have remained obscure. Key corporate players in an era of transition, during which holidays ceased to be a privilege of the few and became a much-cherished part of the lives of the many, have been relatively under-researched.

This thesis aims to contribute towards greater understanding of British travel and tourism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It takes as its central focus a travel firm which emerged under the aegis of Quintin Hogg’s Polytechnic (or Regent Street Polytechnic, hereafter ‘Polytechnic’). The firm gained independent status in 1911 as the Polytechnic Touring Association. It traded for a further fifty years, changing its name along the way to Poly Travel, before its acquisition by a competitor. It eventually became part of one of the UK’s best-known holiday brands, Lunn Poly. The thesis seeks to establish whether, and in what respects, the firm was distinctive, successful and ‘modern’. In doing so, it draws upon a wider historiography of leisure, including concepts of rational recreation and respectability; upon theories of travel writing and representation; and upon debates relating to modernity.

While this thesis focuses on a business, it does not seek to make a substantive contribution to business history. Nonetheless, the Polytechnic Touring Association (hereafter ‘PTA’) is a fruitful subject for research for several reasons. Firstly, the nature of its origins exhibits similarities with several travel firms in the late nineteenth century, with roots in social, educational and philanthropic ideologies of the period. Some features of its operational practices are also recognisable in the workings of other organisations such as the Co-operative Holidays Association (CHA) and its spinoff, the Holiday Fellowship (HF). As another educational institution which spawned travel clubs, Toynbee Hall, which created the Toynbee Travellers Club and the Workmen’s Travelling Club, provides a particularly relevant comparator in terms of the travel operations’ relative scopes and outlooks. The pre-1911 period provides fertile ground in which to site the history of the PTA within not only the modern history of British travel and tourism, but the wider history of leisure,



with particular reference to nineteenth-century efforts to implement 'rational recreation'. Analysis of the PTA in the context of its parent institution also contributes to the history of the Polytechnic and hence to the history of adult education.

Secondly, promotional materials and travel accounts created and written by PTA officials, and by those who went on its holidays, can offer insight into representations by the British of 'abroad' and, by implication, the construction of their own British identity. They are a useful proving ground for certain theories which have arisen from the growing school of postcolonial studies, in particular Edward's Said's theory of Orientalism and Mary Louise Pratt's model of 'anti-conquest'.

Thirdly, the PTA's effective lifespan from the 1880s to the early 1960s - which coincided with the slow fall of the British Empire from its zenith to its dissolution - enables us to consider questions of modernity. How and to what extent did the Polytechnic, the PTA and those who went on its holidays envisage themselves as modern, and how might this have changed over time?

Overall, the history of the PTA supplies a bridge between a time when substantial holidays for the majority of British people, including foreign holidays, could first be imagined as feasible and the time when it came to fruition. Between the idea of mass British travel and tourism, and the reality, came the PTA.

### **Historiography: leisure, travel and tourism, travel writing and representations, modernity**

Leisure history – particularly modern leisure history - has generated a growing body of scholarly work since the 1970s, as 'an offshoot of labour studies'.<sup>1</sup> Leisure itself is not a modern invention; modern ideas of leisure may date back as far as the 15<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>2</sup> Definitions of modern leisure focus on its outcome as a result of other activities, as a 'surplus' available through the productivity of work or, to put it more

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<sup>1</sup> Mike Huggins, 'Second-class citizens? English middle-class culture and sport, 1850-1910: a reconsideration', in John Mangan (ed.), *A sport-loving society: Victorian and Edwardian middle-class England at play* (London: Routledge, 2006), 11.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Burke, 'The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe', in *Past & Present*, Vol. 146 (Feb., 1995), 146.

precisely, ‘that which lies outside the demands of work, direct social obligations and the routine activities of personal and domestic maintenance’.<sup>3</sup>

The Victorian era into which the Polytechnic and the PTA were born saw both the initiation and the continuation of significant changes in the patterns and availability of leisure time for those outside the aristocratic elites. Under the combined influences of industrialisation and urbanisation, the large and small festivals, saints days and holy days with their origins in rural life dwindled, as did the influence of ‘St Monday’, an unofficial holiday often used ostensibly for weddings (and additionally for shaking off the effects of weekend drinking). On the other hand, voluntary agreements in sectors such as textiles led to reduced working hours from 1850 onwards, though the pattern varied between sectors and regions; domestic servants’ free time remained relatively brief. Working men’s clubs and institutes, along with friendly societies and trips to the seaside organised by employers, all played a part in the leisure time of working people, as did traditional pursuits such as horse racing. Meanwhile, rising real wages and population growth created a boom in demand for drinking establishments such as inns, beer-shops, public houses and gin-palaces; as late as 1911, the average family was still spending as much as 9% of its weekly outlay on drink.<sup>4</sup>

Most working people did not yet receive holidays with pay, but they did enjoy more leisure time than before: a matter of concern in some middle-class circles, which intensified in the wake of public health problems, the Chartist troubles of the late 1830s and the year of revolutions in continental Europe, 1848. Sections of the middle class began to exercise a ‘controlling hand’ on many of the critical levers of life in Victorian Britain. The 1832 Great Reform Act gave the urban vote to owners of property with a rateable value of ten pounds, adding a third of a million largely middle-class voters to the electoral roll. As that emergent class continued to grow, so did the electorate, to about 1.2 million by 1859 – about a quarter of the adult male population, compared with around 14% in 1832. The Act ‘altered the balance of political power [even if it] left the structure of society undisturbed’. More MPs came from middle-class backgrounds. Professional associations began to form

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<sup>3</sup> Jeffrey Hill, *Sport, leisure and culture in Twentieth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 8; Peter Bailey, *Leisure and Class in Victorian Britain: Rational Recreation and the contest for control* (London: Routledge, 1978), 6.

<sup>4</sup> John Lowerson and John Myerscough, *Time to spare in Victorian England* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1977), 8-19, 73; Douglas A Reid, ‘Weddings, Weekdays, Work and Leisure in Urban England 1791-1911: The Decline of Saint Monday Revisited’, in *Past & Present*, Vol. 153 (Nov., 1996), 135-163.

to defend their own interests, including the Law Society (1843) and institutes for civil engineers, architects, mechanical engineers, surveyors and chartered accountants. These new bodies gained ‘powers to set public examinations, mark them and issue qualifications’ and, in some cases, legal powers to discipline and regulate members. Voluntary bodies such as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) and temperance associations arose to promote notions of morality and the virtues of self-help.<sup>5</sup> London was the site of the origins in 1844 of the Young Men’s Christian Association (YMCA). Within seven years the YMCA had sprouted seven branches in London and a further 14 in the rest of the UK.<sup>6</sup>

The idea of ‘rational recreation’ arose as a way of regulating the amusement of the lower classes, for their own improvement and to integrate them better into society, and of appeasing middle-class uneasiness about the greater availability of leisure time for themselves. ‘Rational’ referred, among other things, to the stamping-out of sports such as cock and bull baiting.<sup>7</sup> ‘Recreation’ (as opposed to simple rest or amusement) renewed or ‘re-created’ individuals for their working lives and hence complemented work. Peter Bailey has provided a persuasive and influential overview of the diverse forms of ‘rational recreation’, which was ‘basically and relentlessly didactic’. Reformers tried to regulate behaviour or to provide counter-attractions (to draw working-class people away from the pubs, inns and so on), in various emerging or evolving spheres of leisure including music halls, working men’s clubs and sport. Travel could be one of the counter-attractions. The temperance movement, among other things, inspired Thomas Cook’s famous first train trip between Leicester and Loughborough; and travel could be educational, as in Albert Smith’s 1850s lectures on Mont Blanc. Bailey argued that ‘rational recreation’ was neither an unqualified success, nor a simple binary opposition of monolithic middle and working classes.<sup>8</sup> The ideas of novelist and historian Walter Besant (1836-1901) led to the establishment of a People’s Palace in east London, intended as a combination of ‘a club, a university, a playground and college’; but Besant’s personal vision was fundamentally inconsistent, arguing that social and economic circumstances were the only dividers, while proposing to leave the upper classes in charge of implementing solutions. The People’s Palace eventually saw

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<sup>5</sup> Lawrence James, *The middle class: a history* (London: Little, Brown, 2006), 148-50, 232, 255, 298-305.

<sup>6</sup> William J Baker, ‘To pray or to play? The YMCA question in the United Kingdom and the United States, 1850-1900’ in Mangan (ed.), *A sport-loving society*, 198-201.

<sup>7</sup> Lowerson and Myerscough, *Time to spare*, 116-7.

<sup>8</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 47, 54, 71.

redevelopment as a technical college and incorporation into London University.<sup>9</sup> Mark Clapson has tracked the attempts of nineteenth- and early twentieth century legislation to control public gambling, in order to maintain a status quo of double standards where the rich could bet privately with luxuries but ‘the poor could not be allowed to endanger their own economic interests, nor to cause a public nuisance, by betting away their scarce resources in cheap gambling houses’. A key lobbying body, the National Anti-Gambling League (founded in 1890) modelled its campaigning in some ways on the temperance movement and led the arguments that gambling sapped industrial productivity and encouraged a general disinclination to work. However, the various Acts of 1845, 1853, 1874 and 1906 could not control or contain a growing commercialised sporting and betting culture.<sup>10</sup>

A key social divider, cutting across classes, was the concept of respectability/non-respectability. F.M.L. Thompson sited the rise of respectability as starting around 1830, on the simultaneous brink of the Great Reform Act and the development of the railways, which anticipated urbanisation and industrialisation. House building between then and the end of the century focused on better plumbing, separate wings of the house for servants and also separate bedrooms for children – part of a move ‘towards regularity, order, decency, propriety, and the segregation of persons, sexes, and activities in the interests of domestic privacy’. Middle-class society comprised ‘layer upon layer of subclasses, keenly aware of their subtle grades of distinction... clerks, small shopkeepers and schoolteachers of the lower middle classes, struggling to keep up genteel appearances’. A section of the working class also acted ‘respectably’: they ‘paid their rents regularly and took pride in their homes’ and, as one measure of respectability, subscribed to insurance funds. Religion was a central element of middle-class life, teaching ‘piety, chastity, sobriety, filial obedience, and charity, and [it] shunned displays of luxury, sexual transgressions, and all diversions which were not improving or uplifting’. Holidays were ‘not carefree jaunts; but they were escapes from ordinariness into exciting new worlds of well-regulated and carefully rationalized pleasure and happiness’. Overall, despite the sub-layers of society, each section operated its own social controls,

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<sup>9</sup> Deborah Weiner, ‘The People’s Palace: An Image for East London in the 1880s’, in David Feldman and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds.), *Metropolis London: Histories and representations since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1989), 43-9.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Clapson, *A bit of a flutter: Popular gambling and English society, c.1823-1961* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 14-40.

creating stability.<sup>11</sup> In an examination of friendly societies which were, in effect, ‘working-class mutual benefit clubs’, Simon Cordery covered similar ground to Thompson, with a useful overview of three areas of general historiographical agreement on respectability in Victorian Britain. To appear respectable was often to be respectable; religious, educational and self-help bodies reinforced, or tried to reinforce, respectable behaviour; and respectability contributed to relative social stability between 1850 and 1870.<sup>12</sup> On the margins of respectability – and sometimes on the wrong side of the line – was the ‘cockney’, according to Gareth Stedman Jones. Early nineteenth century definitions of the term had focused on vulgarity rather than class identity. Although mid-century representations gave ‘cockneys’ one or two virtues such as uprightness and shrewdness, the extension of the franchise and emergence ‘of new patterns of mass consumption and popular entertainment among the better-paid youth of London’s working population’ caused later perceptions of ‘cockneys’ to be less sympathetic, highlighting their vulgar and rowdy qualities, as products of their social habitats, the pubs and music halls.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, a recent collection of essays edited by Mike Huggins and JA Mangan has criticised historians for ‘too easily [seeing a] uniform commitment to respectability, authority, duty and religion’ in the history of the period. Respectability might depend on the varying contexts of different locations, social settings and stages of life. Some locations such as racecourses, seaside and music halls were ‘liminal’ – making disreputable play possible. Respectability was, argued Huggins and Mangan, ‘adapted to circumstances, occasions and events... a quicksilver phenomenon, reshaping itself to environment, gender, age and time’. Two essays in particular from this collection have focused on the behaviour of young men in academic and sporting institutions.<sup>14</sup> The significance of respectability and ‘rational recreation’ in travel would be key themes in the early years of the Polytechnic – with its origins as a combination of club and classroom for young men - and the PTA. The parent institution and the emerging travel agency certainly

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<sup>11</sup> FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* (London: Fontana, 1988), 13, 156-7, 173, 181, 200-3, 250-1, 263, 360.

<sup>12</sup> Simon Cordery, ‘Friendly Societies and the Discourse of Respectability in Britain, 1825-1875’, in *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (Jan., 1995), 37.

<sup>13</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘The “cockney” and the nation, 1780-1988’, in Feldman and Stedman Jones (eds.), *Metropolis London*, 282-92.

<sup>14</sup> Huggins, Mike and Mangan, JA (eds.), *Disreputable Pleasures: Less virtuous Victorians at play* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), ix-xx. See in particular JA Mangan, ‘Bloods, blues and barbarians: some aspects of late Victorian Oxbridge’ (35-56) and Hamish Telfer, ‘Ludism, laughter and liquor: homosocial behaviour in late-Victorian Scottish harriers clubs’ (185-203).

portrayed themselves as ‘respectable’, and there is little if any evidence of disreputable conduct on Polytechnic/PTA tours. However, the emphasis of a number of accounts of those holidays on simple fun and enjoyment, scrapes and jolly japes suggests that the tours may have been an opportunity, if not to breach respectability’s boundaries, at least to edge close to them, at a safe physical distance from the home institution. This places the Polytechnic’s occasional rhetorical attacks on the perceived ‘cockney’ approach to holidays in an ironic light and may imply a degree of dissonance between the views of the institution’s leadership and the behaviour of the holidaymakers themselves.

The historiography of late Victorian leisure includes a significant strand examining the development of the landscape of sport and its perceived purposes. The earlier Victorian era had seen some reform and abolition of ‘cruel’ traditional sports – cockfighting and bull baiting were virtually gone by the 1840s, though hunting survived – while certain team sports such as rugby and soccer were newly codified, and golf, tennis and cycling were growing to cater for a middle class market.<sup>15</sup> John Lowerson commented that ‘What began as an instrument for containing the potentially disruptive powers of youth was extended as a means of training for future roles [t]hrough emphasising collective responsibility’.<sup>16</sup> Mountaineering became ‘a climbing challenge rather than distant appreciation’ and, by 1900, Henry Lunn was arranging tours for over 5,000 people a year to Switzerland under the aegis of Alpine Tours, as sport and tourism combined.<sup>17</sup> More recently, William J Baker has demonstrated ambivalence and differences of view among the nascent YMCA, in the USA and in Britain, about the desirability of using sport as an ‘amusement’ with which to attract members.<sup>18</sup> Neal Garnham’s research into the nascent YMCA in the north-east of England in the 1870s and 1880s provides further evidence for this ambivalence.<sup>19</sup> Sport was a significant part of the Polytechnic’s activities and of its recreational and general ideology, and this would be reflected in the activities of the PTA.

Moving from leisure to the more specific subject area of tourism, it is hard to disagree with Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough’s comment that ‘Unlike

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<sup>15</sup> Lowerson and Myerscough, *Time to spare*, 116-126.

<sup>16</sup> John Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes 1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), 5.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 55-7.

<sup>18</sup> Baker, ‘To pray or to play?’ in Mangan (ed.), *A sport-loving society*, 198-216.

<sup>19</sup> Neal Garnham, ‘Both Praying and Playing: “Muscular Christianity” and the YMCA in North-East County Durham’, in *Journal of Social History* 35.2 (2001), 399-402.

sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, and literary critics, historians have until recently not given tourism the attention it deserves'.<sup>20</sup> John Walton has recently added to this assessment, considering that 'The dominant discourses of tourism studies have been grounded in economics and business studies' and that history is 'the poor relation'.<sup>21</sup> It is certainly the case that a number of useful and influential insights and theories for the consideration of the modern history of tourism – including the Polytechnic and the PTA - have multidisciplinary origins.

As the basis for a primer for industry professionals, Burkhart and Medlik divided the subject into three time periods with transportation as the central theme: up to 1840; the 'age of coal and steam' from 1840 to 1914; and the modern world thereafter of motor buses, coaches, cars and subsidised national airlines. Their understandable rationale was that 'Transport is the necessary pre-condition of tourism'.<sup>22</sup> More recently, Walton has proposed that a general historiographical focus on rail and then air travel has led to a neglect of the significance of motor-coach tours, which became a significant part of British travel firms' operations in the 1930s and expanded further in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>23</sup>

From a cultural studies perspective, Fred Inglis attempted to analyse 'the way the social meanings of the vacation gradually accumulated'. Inglis noted that modern industrial British society coincided with the Grand Tour (although the latter had been in operation for longer than he acknowledged). As 'ruling-class tourism' gradually became something more diffuse and accessible to the non-aristocratic classes, Inglis argued, a dichotomy emerged between the 'traveller', a solitary and early visitor to tourist locations, and 'tourists', who went there later *en masse*. While places like Brighton attracted a 'vivid overlapping of classes', Inglis saw Thomas Cook's great contribution to tourism as being to open up a version of the Grand Tour for the middle classes, while the less affluent flocked to seaside resorts.<sup>24</sup>

Orvar Löfgren's book, written as part of an interdisciplinary project on national and transnational cultural processes, aimed for 'an archaeology of the present' of tourism. Focusing on North American and European experiences, and

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<sup>20</sup> Shelley Baranowski and Ellen Furlough (eds.), *Being elsewhere: tourism, consumer culture, and identity in modern Europe and North America* (University of Michigan Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>21</sup> John Walton, 'Prospects in tourism history: Evolution, state of play and future developments', in *Tourism Management* Vol. 30 (2009), 783-4.

<sup>22</sup> AJ Burkhart and S Medlik, *Tourism past, present and future* (London: Heinemann, 1974), 3.

<sup>23</sup> John Walton, 'The origins of the modern package tour? British motor-coach tours in Europe, 1930-70', in *Journal of Transport History* Vol. 32 (2), 2011, 145-6, 152-5.

<sup>24</sup> Fred Inglis, *The delicious history of the holiday* (London: Routledge, 2000), 2, 18, 47-50.

citing familiar and unfamiliar sources in order to restore the voice of the tourist, Löfgren highlighted the role of two 18<sup>th</sup> century Swedes, Carl Linnaeus and Jonas Linnerhielm, in the development of the picturesque – a way of seeing, selecting and experiencing views which still influences modern tourism, even though the cult of the sublime and ‘mountain fever’ exemplified by the Alps later superseded it. Löfgren echoed Inglis’s coverage of traveller/tourist dichotomies by proposing the existence of ‘anti-tourists’ who positioned themselves in opposition to the mass of ‘tourists’ who ruin a location. Holidays were a ‘cultural laboratory where people have been able to experiment with new aspects of their identities, their social relations, or their interaction with nature’.<sup>25</sup>

Along parallel lines to Löfgren, James Buzard analysed various texts from nineteenth century literature, travel writing, guidebooks, periodicals and business histories, in the context of the reopening of European travel after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. Buzard detected a growing sentiment among self-styled ‘travellers’ that ‘Abroad, the tourist is the relentless representative of home’. The tourist was seen as incapable of making meaningful contact with the essence of a foreign place and its way of life, whereas ‘travellers’ set out to show that they could. Gradually a suspicion dawned that the mechanisms of modern tourism - Thomas Cook’s tours, the railways and so on – would remake places, and that ‘tourists’ in their masses, although they did not understand places, were the agents of undesirable social change. Buzard’s interpretation of ‘anti-tourism’ as theorised by Löfgren proposed that ‘anti-tourists’ claimed to use a ‘romantic gaze’, appreciating scenery in solitude, recognising the picturesque and experiencing a high level of emotional, historical or aesthetic significance in what they saw. Using Henry James’s writings on Britain and Europe as a case study, Buzard argued that a key aim of travel was ‘appropriation’, which he defined as any action ‘which converts the ‘culture’ encountered through travel into exchangeable items, tokens of cultural accomplishment that are legal tender in the sign-market of personal acculturation at home’.<sup>26</sup>

Löfgren and Buzard’s differing definitions of ‘anti-tourism’ offer useful theoretical tools with which to evaluate the touring experiences and observations of Polytechnic / PTA tour groups. The destinations for those tours, the relatively large

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<sup>25</sup> Orvar Löfgren, *On Holiday: a history of vacationing* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 4, 7, 16-34, 262-4.

<sup>26</sup> James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 8-12, 177-192, 225.



numbers going on them and the reports of the tours may indicate on balance that Polytechnic/PTA holidaymakers adopted elements of a 'romantic gaze' - with a specific institutional tint – and that they sometimes fell on the 'tourist' side of the tourist / 'anti-tourist' equation.

Narrowing the focus to British travel and tourism, the trailblazer for scholarly research in this area was a civil servant, John Pimlott, whose book *The Englishman's Holiday* was researched just before, and published soon after, World War II. Pimlott's work highlighted a gradual convergence of medical opinions championing cold bathing as a health cure, and later the health benefits of sea air; the emergence of efficient and affordable mass transportation options, especially the steamboats and the railways; and a transition from voluntary sector/region agreements for workers' holidays towards a more universal provision of holidays with pay and more holidays generally, with the 1871 Bank Holiday Act as a key landmark. Resorts on the coast had greater capacity than the existing inland spas; they were 'large enough to absorb all comers, and social homogeneity mattered less'. Pimlott charted the creation in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century, in the footsteps of Thomas Cook, of a number of travel agencies, some with social/educational provenance. John Frame, a teetotaler, popularised the Scottish Highlands. Dean and Dawson's origins lay in a private excursion to Paris from Stockport factory in 1871. Henry Lunn entered the travel industry via the Grindelwald Conference 1892: fellow ministers asked him to run a tour to Rome, and for a while he catered specifically for ministers and their families. The Toynbee Travellers' Club and Arlington Travel Club came out of social and educational roots, as did the PTA. By this time, tourists were not merely viewing mountains for their qualities of sublimity, but climbing them, partly due to medical opinion on the beneficial effects of mountain air. As holidays became an accessible reality for more people, the well-to-do preserved their privacy by holidaying in new resorts on the shores of western Europe, and in northern Africa and the Middle East. As Pimlott researched his book, debate about holidays with pay culminated in the 1938 Act of that name and holiday camps, 'the most significant innovation of the century', were beginning to show their capability for catering for large numbers of people on relatively low incomes.<sup>27</sup>

Since the late 1970s, a number of historians have followed in Pimlott's footsteps, examining and expanding the themes which he laid out. James Walvin has

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<sup>27</sup> JAR Pimlott, *The Englishman's holiday: a social history* (London: Faber & Faber, 1947), 55, 142, 169-70, 197-209, 245-9.

argued for the diversity of British seaside resorts, but their similarity in terms of ‘common historical reliance on communications with the major cities’.<sup>28</sup> Walvin has also examined debates and tensions between tourists and resorts on health, cleanliness and behavioural issues as they arose from the growth of the resorts. Mark Judd has demonstrated the durability of popular culture at and around the London fairs, even in the face of technological advance and local regulations; Robert Poole has contended that the traditional Lancashire wakes evolved into ‘mass industrial holidays’ rather than being replaced by them; and FB May has charted the long and bumpy route by which Ilfracombe changed from an exclusive resort for the well-to-do into a mixed resort for visitors of all ages and various social backgrounds.<sup>29</sup> As part of a formidable body of work, John Walton has portrayed the English seaside resort as ‘important not only as a repository for investment, consumer spending and social emulation, but also as a crucible of conflict between classes and lifestyles’. Walton’s work tracks patterns of resort development, types of entertainment on offer and three key phases in ‘the excursionist invasion of the seaside’: the early days of railway and cheap steamer access, when limited visitor numbers meant a relatively low level of conflict and dispute; the 1870s and 1880s, when resorts used planning controls, by-laws and social zoning to contain problems; and the 1890s when, despite class differences being less important in some respects, a new unruly breed of excursionist caused problems and complaints.<sup>30</sup> Walton’s more recent work has taken the seaside resort story into the twentieth century, examining the diversity of experience between, for example, the Lancashire towns and London; and concluding that seaside resorts adapted well to changing interwar circumstances, and did not go into genuine decline until the advent of new youth cultures and the opening up of foreign locations for holidays. In Walton’s view, the questions surrounding seaside resorts are not about why they declined, but why they remained so successful for so long.<sup>31</sup> Historians have not focused solely on the seaside. Ian Ousby considered the opening of the English country house, with Blenheim, Chatsworth, Castle Howard, Wilton and Burghley all having established their reputations by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century

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<sup>28</sup> James Walvin, *Beside the seaside: a social history of the popular seaside holiday* (London: Allen Lane, 1978), 156.

<sup>29</sup> All the above in John Walton and James Walvin (eds.), *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

<sup>30</sup> John Walton, *The English seaside resort: A Social History 1750-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1983), 3, 196-214.

<sup>31</sup> John Walton, *The British seaside: holidays and resorts in the twentieth century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 195.

as exhibition centres of power, status and taste. Woburn had established formal opening hours for visitors by the 1790s and Thomas Cook started to organise trips to country houses in the 1850s – tense occasions when the owners hoped visitors would behave properly and not cause damage. During the same period, the reputation of the Lake District grew as ‘a sequence of conveniently spaced, well-advertised stopping-points’.<sup>32</sup> Allan Redfern has highlighted the role of friendly societies, trade unions and workers in specific departments of the London North Western Railway Company in Crewe, who organised excursions to Manchester, Chester or Liverpool.<sup>33</sup> Meanwhile, Susan Barton has attempted to demonstrate the significant agency of working-class organisations in improving their holiday lot during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They achieved this, Barton believes, through a combination of savings clubs, collective bargaining initiatives, political agitation and increased levels of state intervention in everyday aspects of life. By the post-1945 period, a mobile working-class was ‘no longer imagined to be a threat to society so much as an economic opportunity’.<sup>34</sup>

The story of British holiday camps has been told by Colin Ward and Dennis Hardy, placing the camps’ origins in the context of various developments: the rise of organised youth movements and the ‘discovery’ of Nature; the rise of hobbies such as cycling; some reaction against the ugliness of urban life; and the political-ideological motives of their founders. The original holiday camp entrepreneur was probably Joseph Cunningham who ran annual summer camps for boys from working class institutes in 1880s and 1890s in various locations such as Llandudno in north Wales and the Isle of Man. Although Ward and Hardy did not remark upon it, this was not far removed from the origins of the Polytechnic and the PTA. But, by the heyday of Billy Butlin, Harry Warner and Fred Pontin, the purpose of holiday camps was not educational but ‘to turn [campers’] backs on the world which dominated their lives for the rest of the year’.<sup>35</sup> Most recently, Sandra Trudgen Dawson has built on the research of Ward and Hardy, demonstrating the manner in which Butlin and Warner used the exigencies of the 1939-45 war to put themselves in prime post-war position to benefit from a pent-up explosion of demand for holidays. The

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<sup>32</sup> Ian Ousby, *The Englishman’s England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (London: Pimlico, 2002), 54-70, 123.

<sup>33</sup> Allan Redfern, ‘Crewe: leisure in a railway town’, in Walton and Walvin, *Leisure in Britain*, 127-132.

<sup>34</sup> Susan Barton, *Working-class organisations and popular tourism, 1840-1970* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), 220.

<sup>35</sup> Colin Ward and Dennis Hardy, *Goodnight Campers! The History of the British Holiday Camp* (London: Mansell Publishing, 1986), 4-21, 154.

triumph of holiday camps was in their ‘convergence... with twentieth-century social policies, economics, culture, and war’. With their blurring of class distinctions, the camps ‘complemented the ideology of the postwar settlement’ in which Britain had a socialist government for the first time.<sup>36</sup> As we shall see, the PTA attempted to adapt to the changed holiday landscape after 1945, while retaining the distinctive nature of its own portfolio.

A study of the PTA allows us to consider previously unresearched material in the context of two other academic debates. Firstly, the growth of postcolonial studies has generated a growing literature in the sub-genre of travel writing studies. The consideration of accounts of their travels by Polytechnic/PTA holidaymakers as travel writing may, it is acknowledged, be contentious. Travel writing and its definitions have never been free of contestation. Travel writers themselves have been active in this debate, often admitting that, as practitioners in the genre, their work blurs the lines between fact and fiction. Bruce Chatwin, for one, acknowledged that ‘however closely the narrative may fit the facts, the fictional process has been at work.’<sup>37</sup> In Jonathan Raban’s words, ‘Much of [travel writing’s] “factual” material... is there to authenticate what is really fiction; while its wildest fictions have the status of possible facts...’<sup>38</sup> Critics and historians have created diverse definitions of the genre. Holland and Huggan pointed out that travel narratives ‘borrow freely from history, geography, anthropology, and social science, often demonstrating great erudition, but without seeing fit to respect the rules that govern conventional scholarship... mix[ing] fact and fable, anecdote and analysis.’<sup>39</sup> Taking into account travel writing’s cross-genre characteristics, and the claims of many works of fiction to be ‘travel literature’, Jan Borm suggested a distinction between ‘the *travel book* or *travelogue* as a predominantly (and pre-supposedly) non-fictional genre, and *travel writing* or *travel literature* (*the literature of travel*, if one prefers) as an overall heading for texts whose main theme is travel.’ He argued that travel books comprise a first-person narrative where the author, narrator and principal character are one and the same.<sup>40</sup> This thesis considers the various Polytechnic/PTA

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<sup>36</sup> Sandra Trudgen Dawson, *Holiday camps in twentieth-century Britain: packaging pleasure* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), 2-6.

<sup>37</sup> Bruce Chatwin, *What Am I Doing Here* (London: Pan Books, 1990), xi.

<sup>38</sup> Jonathan Raban, *For Love and Money* (London: Pan Books, 1988), 253-4.

<sup>39</sup> Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan (eds.), *Tourists with typewriters: critical reflections on contemporary travel writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 8-9.

<sup>40</sup> Jan Borm, ‘Defining Travel: On the Travel Book, Travel Writing and Terminology’, from Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs (eds.), *Perspectives on travel writing* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 17, 19.

accounts of tours as travel writing, albeit with travelogue characteristics. They are (mostly) published, predominantly non-fictional, empirical first-person narratives concerning British citizens' journeys abroad or within the internal 'Others' of the British Isles, notably Ireland and Scotland.

The best-known and most influential theory from postcolonial studies with implications for travel writing is Orientalism, as outlined by Edward Said in his book of that title and refined in later publications such as *Culture and Imperialism*. Said defined Orientalism as 'a certain *will* or *intention* to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even to incorporate, what is a manifestly different (or alternative and novel) world... [it] has a considerable dimension of modern political-intellectual culture, and as such has less to do with the Orient than it does with "our" world.' He used examples of British, French and American experiences of, and rhetoric describing, 'the Orient' – such as speeches by the British Conservative politician Arthur Balfour (1848-1930), the Napoleonic expedition to Egypt and the writings of the traveller Richard Burton (1821-1890). These cases underlay Said's description of Orientalism as an academic label, a style of thought, a system of citing works and authors and above all 'a relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony'. Orientalism is not the true 'Orient': it is not about 'truth' but representations. Its proponents constructed – and still construct – 'the Orient' by 'knowing' it, then invading, possessing and recreating it.<sup>41</sup> *Orientalism* remains 'a foundational text for both postcolonial and travel writing studies'.<sup>42</sup>

In the wake of Said's work, Orientalist themes have been discerned in travel writing on destinations as diverse as Chile, Greece and the West Indies.<sup>43</sup> Lucas Tromly, Syrine C Hout and Shampa Roy argued that the writings of three female authors on Morocco, Arabia and India respectively – Edith Wharton, Freya Stark and Fanny Parkes – endorsed colonial hierarchies.<sup>44</sup> However, Hout's demonstration of

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<sup>41</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin, 1991), 5, 12, 21, 92.

<sup>42</sup> Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), 134.

<sup>43</sup> For examples, see M Soledad Caballero, "'For the Honour of our Country: Maria Dundas Graham and the Romance of Benign Domination', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 9:2 (2005), 111-131; Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis, 'Women Writing Greece: Essays on Hellenism, Orientalism and Travel, ed. Vassiliki Kolocotroni and Efterpi Mitsi', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 14:1 (2010), 104-107; and Nadi Edwards, "'That sailor's mistake": 'West Indianist discourse' in four nineteenth-century travelogues', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 5:1 (2001), 35-62.

<sup>44</sup> Lucas Tromly, "'The small talk of the harem": discursive communities and colonial silences in Edith Wharton's *In Morocco*', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 13 No. 3 (2009), 239-250; Syrine C Hout, 'Critical encounters: feminism, exoticism, and Orientalism in Freya Stark's *The Southern Gates of Arabia*', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 6:1 (2002), 54-77; and Shampa Roy, 'Inside the royal zenanas in colonial India: Avadhi and other begums in the travel accounts of Fanny Parkes', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 16 No. 1 (2012), 47-63.

Stark's relatively flexible attitude towards the colonised 'Other' provides one example of the problems inherent in the Saidian theory's insistence on the binary opposition of West and East in such representations. David LeHardy Sweet, examining the writings of four French authors in Egypt, concluded that their work 'acknowledge[s] the distorting influence of orientalist premises and the need for a kind of modernist candour'.<sup>45</sup> Sadik Rddad used British travel accounts on Morocco to propose travel as 'an interactive and negotiated practice between traveller and travellee', an example of 'hybridity' where the Western writer frequently depicted himself as the subject of the native gaze.<sup>46</sup> Roy Bridges and Justin Livingstone urged historians to pay more attention to the original drafts, rather than the published versions, of travel writings, in which greater ambiguity than a simple imperialist approach might be evident. Bridges maintained that 'it is possible to get behind the form of the discourse to some sort of representation of objective realities about Africa and Africans'.<sup>47</sup> David Cannadine argued that 'social ranking was as important as (perhaps more important than?) colour of skin in contemplating the extra-metropolitan world' for the British, who wanted to 'domesticate the exotic' on familiar lines as 'layered, traditional and organic'. The key factor for the British was the conception and understanding of hierarchies within the periphery, just as within the metropolis: and 'ornamentalism was hierarchy made visible, immanent and actual.' Racial considerations were '*only a part* [Cannadine's italics]' of the picture.<sup>48</sup> John MacKenzie accused Said of 'wilful misunderstandings', for example, of the significance of the opera *Aida* and of failing to 'tie analysis to a firm empirical base' of evidence. British-led Orientalist approaches in art, architecture, music and the theatre in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, according to MacKenzie, often led to 'a dramatic liberation from existing conventions', with the arts gaining 'genuine refreshment' from Eastern inspirations. '[C]ultural cross-reference' led European artists to project on to the East 'not only the fantasies and fears or the

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<sup>45</sup> David LeHardy Sweet, 'Orientalist divagations: four French authors in Egypt', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 14 No. 2 (2010), 198.

<sup>46</sup> Sadik Rddad, 'Agency relocated: hybridity and resistance in some British travel accounts on Morocco', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 3:1 (1999), 113-115.

<sup>47</sup> Roy Bridges, 'Explorers' texts and the problem of reactions by non-literate peoples: some nineteenth-century East African examples', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 2:1 (1998), 65-84; Justin Livingstone, 'The meaning and making of *Missionary Travels*: the sedentary and itinerant discourses of a Victorian bestseller', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 15:3 (2011), 267-292.

<sup>48</sup> David Cannadine, *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xix-xx, 8, 122, 126.

West, but also aspirations, renewed values and wished-for freedoms.’ In many cases, interpretation did not have to conform to the Saidian model:

Appropriately contextualised readings [of Orientalist art] substitute highly desirable crafts for technological backwardness, piety and learning for obscurantism, appealing languor for sloth, manly hunting and games-playing for childlike ‘laziness’, repose and self-expression for male dominance and possession, release into exciting new emotional and physical sensations for primitive, animalistic responses.<sup>49</sup>

Said’s theories have inspired not only followers and critics, but also new theories and concepts. Mary Louise Pratt posited one such theory, ‘anti-conquest’, which she defined as ‘strategies of representation whereby European bourgeois subjects seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony’. Anti-conquest began to manifest itself in the wake of travel developments following the publication of Linnaeus’ *The System of Nature* – a system designed to classify all plants on the earth, known or unknown, according to the characteristics of their reproductive parts. European ‘knowledge-making’ had been concerned with navigation and map making, for commercial purposes; this took things a step further, taking life forms out of their own context and rewriting them into ‘European-based patterns of global unity and order’. The growth of natural history was an ‘innocent’ project as it did not seek to dominate overtly, but rather used science as ‘a rich and multi-faceted mirror onto which all Europe could project itself’. The late eighteenth-century scientific writings of Anders Sparrman and William Paterson depicted the land around the Cape of Good Hope as ‘uninhabited, unpossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied’, thus enabling Western appropriation in benign form. Indigenous voices were ‘almost never quoted, reproduced or even invented’, with the local populace being subjected to formal ethnographic analysis in discrete sections of the writing. John Barrow, a personal secretary to the British colonial governor, wrote extensively of the landscape, ‘minimis[ing] the human presence’ and scanning the land for prospects of ‘improvement’. Mungo Park’s *Travels in the Interior Districts of Africa* forsook ethnographic and landscape-scanning literary techniques in favour of the ‘sentimental’ writing of an ‘epic series of trials, challenges and encounters’ with Park as the hero of his own narrative. Africans had a voice in Park’s text, and ‘reciprocity’ – exchanges and negotiations between traveller and indigenous - was a

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<sup>49</sup> John MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, theory and the arts* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 35-37, 55, 209-214.

key theme, but 'European ideologies [were] never questioned directly'.<sup>50</sup> While *Imperial eyes* concentrated mostly on travel writing relating to journeys through Africa and South America, Pratt added that:

Readers of European travel books about Europe have pointed out that many of the conventions and writing strategies I associate here with imperial expansionism occur in travel writing about Europe as well... when that is so, related dynamics of power and appropriation are likely to be there as well.<sup>51</sup>

While Orientalism and anti-conquest can take many forms, elements of both, and of Cannadine's ornamentalism, are present in the various accounts of Polytechnic/PTA tours which survive, mostly within the Polytechnic's inhouse magazines but also in a small selection of private correspondence, up to 1911. The majority of tours visited northern, western, central and (to a lesser degree) southern Europe, rather than anywhere conspicuously 'Oriental' or parts of the British Empire. Nonetheless, analysis of these accounts, from the outward journey to the overall conclusions of the benefits and purposes of holidays, reveals a fascinating picture of self-proclaimed superiority and spectacle, echoes of the Polytechnic's own self-promotion as a pioneering institution and a penchant for fun and enjoyment.

The PTA's history can also be viewed through the prism of modernity, another significant area of academic and historiographical debate. One philosopher and writer has theorised three phases of modernity: the first between c.1500 and the French Revolution; the second between 1790 and 1900 in which a public feeling developed of living in a revolutionary age, and 'living in two worlds simultaneously'; and the twentieth century in which modernisation expanded to cover virtually the whole world, but also shattered into many fragments.<sup>52</sup> Many nineteenth-century European visitors to London wrote of the city as 'grim, if not outright frightening' with individuals as cogs in a vast, impersonal, highly industrialised machine: an unknowable place with relatively little conspicuous communal life and urban symbols and monuments reflecting 'British dominance over the historical and natural worlds'; a city which 'reinforced its own self-identity

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 34.

<sup>51</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial eyes: travel writing and transculturation* (London: Routledge, 2008), 8-9, 12, 29-31, 34-82.

<sup>52</sup> Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London: Verso, 1999), 16-17.



as modern'.<sup>53</sup> Martin Dauntton and Bernhard Rieger have argued that, within Britain, the nature of discussion about modernity changed after c.1870, focusing less on the effects of industrialisation once it became obvious 'that economic growth was not constrained'. While Dauntton and Rieger observed that 'there is no generally accepted theoretical definition of modernity among scholars', their volume of collected writings from various academics was based on 'contemporaries' conviction of living in and through an era of profound, man-made changes as the defining hallmark that observers associated with modernity'.<sup>54</sup> That recognition, Rieger added in a later book on technological innovation and its public reception in Britain and Germany, came with a degree of ambivalence born of the knowledge that, in order to create the 'new', some of the 'old' would have to be replaced or destroyed.<sup>55</sup>

Manifestations of modernity in travel and tourism could appear on land or at sea. Peter Hansen interpreted the behaviour of British mountaineers abroad between 1870 and 1940 as a case of the 'multiplicity' of modernity. They defined themselves as modern against native 'Others' who were considered 'non-modern, ancient, backward, primitive, traditional or superstitious' (and who had not dared to climb the mountains in their own countries). At the same time they performed an alternative modernity to domestic modernity, using the Alps as a refuge, in one writer's words, where 'we may escape from ourselves and our neighbours'.<sup>56</sup> In *Technology and the cult of modernity*, Rieger examined the successful efforts of the public relations departments of the great ocean liner companies in counteracting negative stereotypes of sea travel. They achieved this aim by promoting passenger liners in the image of 'floating palaces' from the 1890s onwards. A key part of the success story involved the formal separation of different classes of passenger, and the concealment of the dangerous conditions in which some crew members worked.<sup>57</sup> Much travel writing, too, deals with issues of modernity, sometimes hailing travel as a palliative against modernity's effects, as Peter Hulme has pointed out, with pilgrimage accounts

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<sup>53</sup> Joseph de Sapio, "'A Reign of Steam": Continental Perceptions of Modernity in Victorian London, 1840-1900', in *London Journal* Vol. 37 (1), 2012, 46-8, 51-2.

<sup>54</sup> Martin Dauntton and Bernhard Rieger (eds.), *Meanings of Modernity: Britain from the Late-Victorian Era to World War II* (Oxford: Berg, 2001), 2-5.

<sup>55</sup> Bernhard Rieger, *Technology and the culture of modernity in Britain and Germany, 1890-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 11.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Hansen, 'Modern Mountains: The Performative Consciousness of Modernity in Britain, 1870-1940', in Dauntton and Rieger, *Meanings of Modernity*, 185-8.

<sup>57</sup> Rieger, *Technology and the culture of modernity*, 160-173.

representing ‘fullness, presence, and authenticity unavailable in modernity.’<sup>58</sup>

Focusing on narratives of journeys to Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Paul Genoni developed this theme, drawing attention to the depiction of the pilgrimage as a ‘nostalgic encounter with a past made desirable by the crippling effects of modernity’ in which the travellers are ‘free from the structured roles they play in their normal lives’ and evince an enhanced desire for ‘community’.<sup>59</sup>

Other aspects of late nineteenth and early twentieth century British culture and leisure, incorporating developments in British travel and tourism, have been the subjects of intensive debate with regard to modernity and its opposite. In the rise of the ramblers’ movement and interest in folk culture and organic husbandry, Frank Trentmann perceived ‘a new romanticism’ and a new type of ‘anti-modernism’ which sought a ‘cure for the mental sickness of modern humanity’ arising from the anonymity of contemporary work and leisure patterns.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, Peter Mandler argued that any ‘swooning nostalgia for the rural past [took] place only among a small, articulate but not necessarily influential avant-garde’. Before 1914, ‘English culture as a whole was aggressively urban and materialist’; between the wars, the suburbs grew, but in order to take the city into the country rather than as a rejection of urban modernity. There was an increase in inland holidaying, in contrast from the traditional British holidays at seaside resort but, in Mandler’s estimation, this was due to capacity problems as much as rural nostalgia.<sup>61</sup> In a collection of writings about Britain and modernisation after 1945, the editors echoed Daunton and Rieger’s views on the instability of modernity’s meanings. ‘Modernity’ could refer to an Enlightenment project in which science would free the West from want and reason would defeat religion; the rise of the nation state and political structures linked to mass democracy; industrialisation, urbanisation and their effects; or, in cultural terms, ‘how modernity organises experience and orchestrates conflicting structures of feeling’. To emphasise a diversity of approaches and conclusions, some of the articles in the collection depicted aspects of ‘modernisation’ as having failed, others ‘gloss[ed] modernity as a discourse of regulation, while [the remainder] remain[ed]

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<sup>58</sup> Peter Hulme, ‘Travel and travel writing: some recent collections of essays’, in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 4:1 (2000), 187.

<sup>59</sup> Paul Genoni, ‘The pilgrim’s progress across time: medievalism and modernity on the road to Santiago’, in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Vol. 15: 2 (2011), 157, 169-170.

<sup>60</sup> Frank Trentmann, ‘Civilization and its Discontents: English Neo-Romanticism and the Transformation of Anti-Modernism in Twentieth Century Western Culture’, in *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol. 29 (1994), 583-625.

<sup>61</sup> Peter Mandler, ‘Against “Englishness”: English Culture and the Limits to Rural Nostalgia, 1850-1940’, in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 6<sup>th</sup> ser., 7 (1997), 160-172.

studiously neutral about its implications'.<sup>62</sup> More recently, discussing the lack of academic research on the cultural formations linking the bicycle era and the automobile age, Zack Furness has described 'the dominant paradigm of modernity [as] scientific rationalism, a focus on individual autonomy and a fascination with newness'.<sup>63</sup>

The complex and contentious subject of modernity – along with its related process, modernisation - is a resonant one when considering the history of the PTA. Its pre-1911 days under the wing of the Polytechnic featured consistent efforts to promote itself as a pioneer, in line with its parent institution's own self-image (and, after all, pioneering could almost be an extreme definition of modernity). In representations of 'abroad' and the 'Other' in reports of its tours, Polytechnic/PTA authors were not averse to portraying foreigners as a non-modern antithesis of themselves; and the emphasis on the simple enjoyment of holidays, as we shall see in chapter 5, was distinctive and, arguably, distinctively modern. On the other hand, there was relatively limited development of the PTA's holiday portfolio after 1911 (despite a retrospectively expressed wish to catch up with more innovative competitors). Moreover, internal documentation from the files of the PTA's advertising agency in the late 1950s and early 1960s suggests a shrinking existing market and a perceived lack of ambition from PTA management. Along with this came an increasing tendency to self-historicisation and towards promotion of the firm's reliability, based on its longevity. If we take up Furness's definition of modernity, and particularly the idea of 'fascination with newness', then it is possible to view the post-1911 PTA as being less than 'modern', in the sense that it did not lead or create major developments in the travel and tourism industry, but rather adapted to them.

### **The Polytechnic, the PTA and competitors: primary and secondary sources**

The principal primary sources for this thesis are the archives of the Polytechnic and the PTA, both held at the University of Westminster. For the PTA, the research materials include administrative records, financial records, promotional brochures,

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<sup>62</sup> Becky Conekin, Frank Mort and Chris Waters (eds.), *Moments of Modernity: Reconstructing Britain 1945-1964* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1999), 9, 21.

<sup>63</sup> Zack Furness, *One less car: bicycling and the politics of automobility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 15.

## Chapter 1

guidebooks, souvenirs and memorabilia such as postcards and travel diaries and various items of correspondence. The Polytechnic archival materials include the Polytechnic's inhouse magazine, initially called *Home Tidings* and later *The Polytechnic Magazine*; the *Poly Portrait Gallery*, a booklet identifying key figures from the Polytechnic's early years; and minutes of the Governing Body, the Finance and General Purposes Committees and other sub-committees. The archives of Thomas Cook, Toynbee Hall, the Co-operative Holidays Association (CHA) and the Holiday Fellowship provide comparator material in the forms of handbooks, programmes and promotional brochures; business records; travellers' guidebooks and diaries; and inhouse magazines (*The Excursionist* and later *The Traveller's Gazette* for Cook, the *Toynbee Record* for Toynbee Hall, *Comradeship* for the CHA and *Over the Hills* for the Holiday Fellowship).

Beyond the University of Westminster, various archives hold useful information about the PTA. The History of Advertising Trust (HAT) archive retains correspondence from the early days of the Samson Clark advertising agency, whose principal was an important figure within the Polytechnic in promoting its tours, particularly as Editor of the *Polytechnic Magazine*. HAT's client files for the advertising agency J Walter Thompson include many examples of the PTA's advertising in the 1950s and early 1960s, as well as internal agency correspondence evaluating the PTA's plans and reporting on market research conducted on the client's behalf. For the post-1911 PTA, Companies House in London retains copies of the Certificate of Incorporation and the Articles and Memorandum for the PTA, along with Annual Returns charting changes in ownership and directorships, and details of special resolutions such as the change of name to Poly Travel Limited in 1958. However, no annual accounts are held for the period between 1911 and 1967. This is a major drawback if we wish to consider the business success of the PTA on a systematic basis. The state archives in Lucerne, Switzerland, give glimpses of the story of the holiday chalets bought in the 1890s and retained by the Polytechnic/PTA until the 1960s. Churchill College Cambridge holds copies of correspondence between two of Quintin Hogg's grandsons, Quintin Hogg (1907-2001, Viscount Hailsham 1950-63) and Neil McGarel Hogg (1910-1995), latterly a director and part-owner of the PTA, which sheds light on the final days of the independent PTA (by then renamed Poly Travel) before its acquisition in 1962. The BBC Written Archives in Caversham holds transcripts of the contents of some post-war BBC radio broadcasts in which PTA representatives took part. In addition to these sources, in

order to gain a greater perspective on the PTA in the 1950s and its eventual acquisition, this thesis uses correspondence with Harold Bamberg, the entrepreneur who bought the company in 1962, and an interview with Maurice and Shelia Steer, who worked at the PTA / Poly Travel for a combined period of ten years.

A few of the key contemporary protagonists in travel and tourism alluded to the Polytechnic and/or the PTA when writing about their own contributions to the industry. One of Henry Lunn's memoirs referred to his appointment as the Polytechnic's Chaplain.<sup>64</sup> Lunn's close links with the Polytechnic in the 1890s, as its Chaplain, the Speaker of the Polytechnic Parliament and as a tour leader, as well as evidence of co-promotion of his own tours with the Polytechnic, have not been remarked upon by historians – a lacuna which this thesis addresses. T Arthur Leonard, a prime mover behind the creation of the CHA and later the Holiday Fellowship, recalled:

In the early days the only holiday-making society was the Polytechnic, which startled the world by offering "A week in lovely Lucerne for £5". But nothing was being done to open up our own country for holidays. When the CHA started we enjoyed much friendly help from Mr Robert Mitchell, secretary of the Polytechnic, who gave us publicity and some influential introductions. Once we joined hands at a centre.<sup>65</sup>

Thomas Okey, who took over the planning of Toynbee Travellers' Club excursions in 1892, was not so generous, mentioning the Polytechnic only as one of a number of travel firms of whose efforts he claimed the Toynbee Travellers' Club was the 'parent'.<sup>66</sup> Over fifty years after creating Horizon Holidays, Vladimir Raitz remembered his struggles to get flight restrictions removed and realised that, in doing so, he would attract 'the attention of the large, established travel companies like Thomas Cook, Polytechnic, Sir Henry Lunn, Global and others'. Raitz's co-author Roger Bray noted that, in 1963, Sir Henry Lunn & Poly Group 'later to be called Lunn-Poly' pressed ABTA for guarantee schemes to get better industry regulation.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Sir Henry Lunn, *Nearing Harbour: the log of Sir Henry S Lunn* (London: Ivor Nicholson & Watson, 1934), 33.

<sup>65</sup> T Arthur Leonard, *Adventures in holiday making: Being the story of the Rise and Development of a People's Holiday Movement* (London: Holiday Fellowship, 1934), 141.

<sup>66</sup> Thomas Okey, *A Basketful of Memories: An Autobiographical Sketch* (London: JM Dent & Sons, 1930), 69-70.

<sup>67</sup> Roger Bray and Vladimir Raitz, *Flight to the Sun: The Story of the Holiday Revolution* (London: Continuum, 2001), 16, 85.

Hence Raitz and Bray drew attention to the PTA's size and status within the industry in the post-1945 era.

This leaves one further significant primary source, a curious mix of autobiography and business reminiscences by Ronald Studd, Managing Director of the PTA for over thirty years. Written in 1950, *The Holiday Story* was not as definitive an account as its title might suggest. Quintin Hogg's death was given as occurring in 1902 (it was a year later) and the eight-year gap between that event and the incorporation of the PTA as a limited company was skated over in two paragraphs. Nonetheless, although we should treat Studd's account with degrees of caution and scepticism, it does inadvertently highlight various points of interest, such as Mitchell's advice to the incoming Studd that "Lucerne is the only place where you can make any money. In fact, everything else is a waste of time." Studd's lament that, after World War II, 'We [the PTA and other established travel agencies] were out of mode, like golden sovereigns', undercuts the book's dominant upbeat tone.<sup>68</sup>

Moving on to secondary sources, academic histories of any modern British travel firm are rare, with the obvious exception of Thomas Cook, which has inspired a succession of books - some clearly intended to protect and enhance the firm's reputation.<sup>69</sup> Bill Cormack's ostensible overview of holidays in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was, in reality, the fourth and final part of a series, of which the previous three volumes were extracts or reprints of primary materials from the Thomas Cook archives. Cormack's conclusion that the history of holidaying abroad 'represents a social revolution which has contributed to the peace of Europe to an extent which has never been properly evaluated' may kindly be described as contentious.<sup>70</sup> Piers Brendon, one of the more recent authors to tackle Cook, declared that his work was 'not a business history so much as a tale of human endeavour'. The main weight of its scholarship related to the firm's development over the 19<sup>th</sup> century - perhaps, we may guess, because research material from more recent times was subject to commercial confidences. Brendon painted a vivid picture of the firm's eponymous creator (1808-1892), whose twin obsessions with temperance and travel were neatly symbolised by his role in building a temperance

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<sup>68</sup> Ronald Studd, *The Holiday Story* (London: Percival Marshall, 1950), 60, 96, 145.

<sup>69</sup> For example, W. Fraser Rae, *The Business of Travel - A Fifty Years' Record of Progress* (London: Thos Cook & Son, 1891); John Pudney, *The Thomas Cook Story* (London: Michael Joseph, 1953); Edmund Swinglehurst, *Cook's Tours - The Story of Popular Travel* (Poole: Blandford Press, 1982).

<sup>70</sup> Bill Cormack, *A History of Holidays, 1812-1990* (Abingdon: Routledge/Thoemmes Press and Thomas Cook Archives, 2002), 112-3.

hall in Leicester, and his own hotel next to it. From the early days of excursions to Scotland, when much of Cook's clientele consisted of clergy, doctors, schoolmasters and governesses, there was a broad middle-class hue to the operation. When John Cook took over the running of the business from his father, he obtained travel commissions from more august sources, culminating in the firm's involvement in Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee celebrations and an organised trip for German Kaiser Wilhelm II to Jerusalem in 1898. John Cook's sons Frank and Ernest continued his drive to modernise the firm, and initiated 'Popular Tours' for people who could not afford 'select' conducted tours. After World War I, large profits, the conversion of the firm to a limited company in 1923 and innovations such as the first escorted tour by air – from New York to Chicago in 1927 – promised a bright future. However, the Wall Street Crash and subsequent depression turned profits to losses and prompted the firm to try a 'bewildering variety' of manoeuvres to improve matters. The post-World War II nationalisation of Thomas Cook led to a more conservative management style, although its market share and profits still held up well in the 1950s. Midland Bank acquired the firm in 1972.<sup>71</sup> Brendon and other recent scholars have attempted to apply critical analysis to some of the more extravagant claims for Thomas Cook's significance and pioneering status in matters such as the invention of the railway excursion and Cook's role in organising trips to continental Europe, the seaside and the 1851 Great Exhibition.<sup>72</sup>

John Towner may have had the number of publications on Thomas Cook in mind when he observed that 'archive research on firms engaged in the tourist industry may reveal new sources of information; at present the influence of a few travel firms has perhaps been overstressed.'<sup>73</sup> Recent scholarship has begun to fill in the picture of Thomas Cook's competitors. David Prynne set the creation of the CHA in a late nineteenth century context of the rise of organisations such as the Independent Labour Party, which were attempting to change the economic and social order, and the Clarion Club, which both distributed and softened its socialist message with social activities such as cycling, rambling, glee, camping and camera clubs. The CHA and its spin-off organisation, the Holiday Fellowship, 'quickly lost their

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<sup>71</sup> Piers Brendon, *Thomas Cook: 150 years of popular travel* (London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1991), 3, 53, 71-2, 239-241, 253, 259-272, 278-297.

<sup>72</sup> John Walton, 'Thomas Cook: Image and Reality', in Richard W Butler and Roslyn A Russell (eds.), *Giants of tourism* (Wallingford: CABI, 2010), 84-8.

<sup>73</sup> John Towner, 'Approaches to tourism history', in *Annals of Tourism Research*, Vol. 15 (1988), 56.

working class following and became largely middle class in composition'.<sup>74</sup> Robert Snape placed the birth of the CHA within a framework of a search for 'the authentic, unadulterated England' exemplified in writings about the countryside by Wordsworth, Ruskin and others.<sup>75</sup> Snape identified the 'religious resort' at Lake Chautauqua in New York state, an amalgam of bible readings with 'highly regulated regimes of leisure' as a key influence on JB Paton, who founded the National Home Reading Union (NHRU) in 1889. The NHRU helped to publicise the nascent CHA – inspired by T Arthur Leonard, a Congregationalist minister and a former student of Paton - with which it shared a Christian, rational, respectable, temperance-based ethos.<sup>76</sup> Over time, the CHA's 'gradual but definite retreat from simplicity' and austerity in its holiday provision caused Leonard to resign his CHA position and found the Holiday Fellowship in 1913.<sup>77</sup> A work on the Fellowship by its archivist has outlined the manner in which it echoed the CHA's original emphasis on international friendship and on simple holiday facilities and strict rules and conventions, at least in the 1920s and 1930s ('absolute quiet' after 11.00pm at the holiday centres; guests making their own beds; no intoxicating drinks permitted). Only as late as 1969, at an Annual General Meeting, did the Fellowship agree that it was no longer obligatory to ring a bell or say grace before meals.<sup>78</sup>

Asa Briggs and Anne Macartney's centenary-marking history of Toynbee Hall briefly noted the growth in its early years of organised trips abroad, for the benefit of students, which evolved into the Toynbee Travellers' Club then, in 1902, the Workmen's Travelling Club and eventually the Workers' Travel Association (WTA).<sup>79</sup> As Joan D Browne pointed out, this activity reflected the articles of Toynbee Hall, which defined one of its aims as being 'to provide education and the means of recreation and enjoyment for the people of the poorer districts of London and other great cities'. The Travellers' Club was part of this 'informal programme... even if it failed to reach the 'ordinary working man' with whose problems [its founder] Canon Barnett was chiefly concerned'. Membership was confined at first to

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<sup>74</sup> David Prynne, 'The Clarion Clubs, Rambling and the Holiday Associations in Britain since the 1890s', in *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 11 (1976), 65, 74.

<sup>75</sup> Robert Snape, 'The Co-operative Holidays Association and the cultural formation of countryside leisure practice', in *Leisure Studies* Vol. 23: 2 (2004), 144.

<sup>76</sup> Robert Snape, 'An English Chautauqua: the National Home Reading Union and the development of rational holidays in late Victorian Britain', in *Journal of Tourism History* Vol.2, No. 3, November 2010, 215-6, 224-5.

<sup>77</sup> Snape, 'The Co-operative Holidays Association', 154.

<sup>78</sup> Harry Wroe, *The story of HF Holidays* (London: HF Holidays, 2007), 20, 36.

<sup>79</sup> Asa Briggs and Anne Macartney, *Toynbee Hall: The First Hundred Years* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 29-32.



students, residents and associates of the Hall. But members of University Extension classes were eligible on probation and, after election at a general meeting, could join the tours.<sup>80</sup> This made for a notable contrast with the Polytechnic, which ran tours initially for its members and students but soon expanded their availability to members of the general public: a key operational decision which would have implications both for the numbers of people who went on the tours and for the promotion of the tours in educational and other terms. Although neither the Toynbee Travellers' Club nor the Workmen's Travelling Club resumed activities after World War I, Toynbee Hall hosted a key meeting in 1921 at which a number of labour-based organisations agreed to support the creation of the WTA. In what he described as 'an authorized [but] an entirely independent history', Francis Williams charted the WTA's origins, its survival of the early 1930s economic crisis and its development after World War II. Williams argued that the WTA had reflected and helped to shape an increase in the habit of annual holidays and that it had been 'part of that movement towards greater equality between social groups which is one of the most characteristic features of our time'.<sup>81</sup>

Much of the secondary literature has mentioned the PTA in tantalising, fleeting terms, if at all. The title of Lynne Withey's overview of leisure travel history is a broad hint of a typical Thomas Cook-centric perspective.<sup>82</sup> Susan Barton's work on winter tourism in the Alps concentrated on a wealthy minority who went there initially for their health rather than the large numbers of PTA tourists.<sup>83</sup> Brendon made passing reference to Thomas Cook's competitors such as Dean & Dawson, Frames and the Polytechnic, 'many prompted, like Cook, by high-minded impulses', while implying that Cook's most significant late nineteenth-century competitor was Henry Gaze, until Gaze's firm went bankrupt in 1903 while under the management of his sons.<sup>84</sup> Walton's article on motor-coach tours used the contents of a 1939 PTA brochure as an example of the late 1930s use of coaches to offer sightseeing drives once the holidaymaker was already at the destination, in an era when rail was still the dominant mode of land-based holiday travel.<sup>85</sup> Jim Ring's

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<sup>80</sup> Joan D Browne, 'The Toynbee Travellers' Club', in *History of Education* 1986 (Vol. 15), 11-14.

<sup>81</sup> Francis Williams, *Journey into Adventure: the story of the Workers Travel Association* (London: Odhams Press, 1960), 164-70.

<sup>82</sup> Lynne Withey, *Grand Tours and Cook's Tours: a history of leisure travel 1750-1915* (London: Aurum Press, 1998).

<sup>83</sup> Susan Barton, *Healthy living in the Alps: The origins of winter tourism in Switzerland, 1860-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

<sup>84</sup> Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, 3, 183-5.

<sup>85</sup> John Walton, 'British motor-coach tours in Europe', 151-2.

history of Alpine tourism in Switzerland focused more on Thomas Cook and Henry Lunn and implied that PTA holidays generally followed the lead of the 1888 Swiss trip by Polytechnic schoolboys in ‘aim[ing] to provide as much instruction as [they] did pleasure.’<sup>86</sup> A recent popular history of British tourism in Europe between 1814 and 1914 has asserted that ‘The Polytechnic, like Crisp, Gaze and Cook, all aimed at a market which went to the lowest reaches of the middle class, but no further...’, although it mistakenly claimed that the PTA started operating in 1882 and oversimplified the eventual fate of the company.<sup>87</sup>

Michele Strong noted that ‘All but hidden from history, the Polytechnic barely registers in the historiography of the era’. Her article focused on the modern aspects of ‘educational travel’, examining the Polytechnic’s ‘spirit of travel’ as it existed not only through the PTA, but throughout the institution: the travel content in the reading room; guest speakers from British colonies; the teaching of foreign languages; and the publication in the *Polytechnic Magazine* of the success stories of students who had succeeded abroad, some of whom formed informal ‘colonies’, and of Hogg’s letters from his own travels. Strong concluded that while ‘The Polytechnic’s role as an agent of change was an important theme in its institutional narrative... the promise of the future that was inscribed in educational travel led students down a path that terminated in a relatively static social order.’<sup>88</sup> The Polytechnic’s self-image as a pioneer institution did not necessarily reflect the reality of the tours it organised, a theme we shall pick up in later chapters.

Until recently, the most significant body of work depicting the ‘official’ Polytechnic history was written by Quintin Hogg’s daughter.<sup>89</sup> Given the identity of the author, and her continuing presence on the Polytechnic Governing Body into the 1960s, Ethel Wood’s books could scarcely avoid the central defect of ‘unreliable narrator’ syndrome; and, unsurprisingly, the PTA only appeared as a minor part of the larger Polytechnic story. However, Wood’s work did bring out some significant points: the importance of Robert Mitchell (1855-1933), the Polytechnic’s Director of Education, in the birth of the PTA; the gradual nature of the separation from the

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<sup>86</sup> Jim Ring, *How the English made the Alps* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011), 147.

<sup>87</sup> Richard Mullen and James Munson, *The Smell of the Continent: The British Discover Europe 1814-1914* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2010), 47.

<sup>88</sup> Michele M Strong, ‘Class Trips and the Meaning of British Citizenship: Travel, Educational Reform, and the Regent Street Polytechnic at Home and Abroad, 1871-1903’, in *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 51 (January 2012), 106, 115-6, 128-131.

<sup>89</sup> Ethel Wood, *A history of the Polytechnic* (London: Macdonald & Co, 1965); *Robert Mitchell: A Life of Service* (London: Frederick Muller Ltd., 1934); *The Polytechnic and its founder Quintin Hogg* (London: Nisbet, 1932); *Quintin Hogg: a biography* (London: Archibald Constable & Co., 1904).

Polytechnic after 1911 (at notable variance with pre-1911 Polytechnic claims that the PTA was already a separate enterprise); and an estimate that, by 1932, the PTA was catering for ‘roughly 60,000 travellers every year’.<sup>90</sup> Wood’s biography of Mitchell emphasised not only Mitchell’s pivotal role in securing the Polytechnic’s most famous property, the Chalets at Lucerne in Switzerland, but the significance of Mitchell’s wife Isabella (1857-1949) as ‘hostess’ (i.e. manageress) of the Chalets.<sup>91</sup> A later biography of JEK Studd (1858-1944), Hogg’s chief lieutenant and later his successor as Polytechnic President, alluded to Studd’s work in managing Polytechnic tours of Scotland and, in later years, his summer visits to Lucerne.<sup>92</sup>

The Polytechnic and PTA have received more attention recently in a series of books published by the University of Westminster to chart its own history from 1838 to the present day. Brenda Weeden’s *The Education of the Eye: a History of the Royal Polytechnic Institution 1838-1881* covers the establishment and eventual closure of the organisation which occupied 309 Regent Street before Quintin Hogg’s Polytechnic. It identifies several themes which would become familiar under the Polytechnic: a pioneering spirit, as exemplified in the opening of Europe’s first photographic studio in 1841; a blend of populism and education, with science demonstrations and ‘Pepper’s Ghost’ co-existing alongside a developing programme of lectures and classes; and continuing financial difficulties which caused the RPI’s closure in 1881.<sup>93</sup> Mark Clapson’s *An Education in Sport* has demonstrated that the Polytechnic’s sporting activities spanned the whole of the London metropolis. The Polytechnic emerged as a pioneer in women’s sports and one of its sporting clubs played a key role in the Marathon at the 1908 London Olympics.<sup>94</sup> The latest volume *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit* covers 1864-1992 and carries an underlying theme of continuity and change over that period. It includes contributions by various authors on Quintin Hogg; the split between the educational and social sides of the institution; student life; the role of women; attitudes to war; and the PTA (the latter written by the current author).<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 310.

<sup>91</sup> Wood, *Robert Mitchell*, 23-30.

<sup>92</sup> Alys L Douglas Hamilton, *Kynaston Studd* (London: The Polytechnic, 1953), 44-5.

<sup>93</sup> Brenda Weeden, *The Education of the Eye: a History of the Royal Polytechnic Institution 1838-1881* (London: Granta, 2008).

<sup>94</sup> Mark Clapson, *An Education in Sport: Competition, communities and identities at the University of Westminster since 1864* (Cambridge: Granta, 2012).

<sup>95</sup> Elaine Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit: The legacy of Quintin Hogg and the Polytechnic, 1864-1992* (Cambridge: Granta, 2013).

## Research scope

**Chapter 2** covers the early days of the Polytechnic and then the PTA, between the late 1870s and 1891-2. It demonstrates the significance of the Polytechnic's host city London as a centre of economic growth and inward migration, particularly by white collar workers, and of an astonishing variety of philanthropic activity. Londoners in this period were beginning to receive greater amounts of leisure time, and to discover new leisure activities including travel. Profiles of the principal Polytechnic leaders – Quintin Hogg, Robert Mitchell and JEK Studd – highlight their religious devotion and passions for sport and travel. The development of the early Polytechnic's classes and clubs is noted, along with its regular and substantial deficits. The chapter documents early travels by Polytechnic members and communications from expatriates. It analyses the first official Polytechnic foreign tours – to Switzerland in 1888 and Paris in 1889 – and argues that their significance lay not only in epitomising the benefits of educational travel, but also in their exporting of Polytechnic values and in the first possibility of opening up Polytechnic tours to a wider audience. It charts the early use of UK holiday homes and the reflection of the Polytechnic's philanthropic values in the Holiday by Proxy Fund. Finally, it profiles some of the travel firms which emerged, like the PTA, in the 1880s and 1890s, mostly on a non-commercial basis in the first instance and almost all fitting within the broad church of 'rational recreation'. The Polytechnic's (and hence the PTA's) distinctiveness grew out of a unique blend of ideology and geography; and it separated itself from its closest comparator, Toynbee Hall, by opening its tours to holidaymakers from beyond its own community.

**Chapter 3** examines the growth and development of the PTA through the 1890s and into the early years of the twentieth century, by which time the name 'Polytechnic Touring Association' was coming into use. It charts the evolution of the UK holiday homes and tours portfolio, and the development of Polytechnic tours to north-western continental Europe, particularly Switzerland and Norway, which recent research has shown were well-established as 'pre-modern', non-urban places opening up to a wider clientele by the late nineteenth century. Switzerland in particular became the core of the PTA portfolio, a bias not found in other travel agencies aiming at the same target markets. For Polytechnic parties, Switzerland and Norway offered the opportunity to follow Polytechnic hobbies and passions and to display Polytechnic virtues and values. The chapter draws attention to a selection of relatively lengthy and expensive foreign tours which provided a notable contrast with

the Polytechnic rhetoric of providing holidays for those of limited means. It explains the key roles not only of Hogg and JEK Studd in managing (and in Hogg's case helping to finance) tours, and Mitchell in organising them, but also of other Polytechnic personnel in personally leading the tours and helping to promote them through external lectures and advertising. It outlines some of the consequences of the Polytechnic's post-1891 status as a charity under the domain of the Charity Commissioners, with the Governing Body eventually insisting on separate accounts for the tours and the elimination of any acceptance of liability by themselves. In parallel to this came criticisms from within the Polytechnic focusing on the time and resources devoted to the tours in comparison with other Polytechnic activities. The challenges of running a profit-making travel agency facing both outwards and inwards towards the Polytechnic community of clubs and societies was unique to the PTA. Nonetheless, the numbers of Polytechnic tourists continued to rise and the touring operations expanded.

**Chapter 4** extends the timeframe to 1911 and scrutinises some of the Polytechnic/PTA's key claims in its communications and publicity – in particular its self-promotion as a pioneer. The Polytechnic's self-image as a pioneer of 'co-operative' holidays is examined in the context of contemporary uses of that term, and it is argued that Polytechnic tours may have been 'co-operative' in a social, rather than an economic or political, sense. The chapter also analyses the use – and sometimes the absence – of 'educational' criteria for holidays. It demonstrates that, by late in the first decade of the new century, the Polytechnic/PTA was giving less emphasis than before to the direct educational benefits of the holidays themselves and that feedback from Polytechnic tourists emphasised a wider range of motivations for travel, such as rational, respectable and, above all, sociable credentials. An analysis of holiday prices in comparison with similar offerings from competitors reveals that the Polytechnic/PTA's boast of providing 'specially low rates' not available elsewhere was not entirely sustainable, although their prices were highly competitive in many cases. With previous scholarly work and contemporary testimony on the customer base of competitors as comparators, Chapter 4 uses Polytechnic membership candidate records over twenty years, and extant lists of holidaymakers, to try to pinpoint the general profile of Polytechnic/PTA holidaymakers, concluding that it remained generally lower middle-class, respectable and – in contrast with the CHA and Toynbee Hall – predominantly male. The lower middle-class nature of the clientele is evidence of the PTA's success in tapping a

growing market; a success not just numerical, but also financial. Chapter 4 follows up the financial content of the previous chapter with a more detailed breakdown of PTA accounts and tourist numbers. It finds that European land-based tours were the most consistently profitable, with Switzerland generating the bulk of tourist numbers, income and profits. Cruises were much less profitable and often loss-makers, while UK holiday homes broke even or made small losses.

**Chapter 5** discusses the representation of UK and foreign holiday locations in travel accounts in the Polytechnic's inhouse magazine, and in private diaries, up to 1911, using CHA and Toynbee Hall material in particular as comparators. An analysis of the travel accounts considers the writers' representations of the outward journeys, the overall content of the tours of the spectacle which Polytechnic parties presented to indigenous populations and the destinations themselves as sites for the demonstration of Polytechnic success stories. In an echo of the 'sentimental' techniques cited by Pratt in *Imperial eyes*, Polytechnic groups saw themselves as the centre of their own narratives: staying together as tight-knit groups on the outward journeys and reporting themselves as spectacles for the locals and as reinforcers of the Polytechnic's pioneering self-image. Polytechnic travel accounts did not comment on local people as much as CHA or Toynbee reports but, when they did, their accounts evinced a vision of some continental Europeans, especially the French, which was a variation on Orientalism, along with a high respect for foreign royalty which privileged class over race, as per Cannadine's 'ornamentalist' arguments. However, Polytechnic travel writers found more positive qualities in the Swiss and the Norwegians than in the French, and even the generally negative depiction of the French softened over time, complicating any simple conclusion that these accounts were 'Orientalist'. Both in their self-presentation as pioneers and in their presentation of most foreigners as in a sense 'pre-modern', Polytechnic travel writers portrayed the groups in which they travelled as modern. In their diverse views on the purpose and benefits of travel and holidays, and in their emphasis on sheer enjoyment, the travel accounts presented a version of modernity which differed from the more politically engaged and internationalist outlooks – in varying measures - of CHA and Toynbee writers. They also hinted that Polytechnic/PTA holidays could act as liminal areas where members of the Polytechnic community could edge closer to respectability's boundaries. As a body of writing, this chapter suggests, Polytechnic travel accounts may merit the term 'collective Continentalism'.

**Chapter 6** considers the evolution of the PTA between its change of status to a privately-owned company in 1911 and its acquisition by an aviation entrepreneur in 1962. During this period, two world wars, changing leisure trends, new modes of transport and communications and the emergence of new competitors and new types of holidays presented the PTA with a series of challenges. The chapter uses Polytechnic-based sources – in particular the inhouse magazine and governing body minutes – reflecting the firm’s continuing links with its parent institution. It considers evidence from Companies House, brochures and press advertising, radio broadcast scripts, market research, other correspondence and a personal interview with two members of the PTA’s head office staff. The evidence suggests that, particularly by the 1950s, the company was a sizeable and well-respected player in the travel and tourism industry. Its distinctiveness derived to some extent from its gradual rather than rapid evolution, particularly in the retention of its Polytechnic connections and the continuing strong presence of Switzerland in its destinations portfolio. Conversely, these same features suggest that the post-1911 PTA was not necessarily ‘modern’ in the sense of a basic ‘fascination with newness’ or a tendency to innovate or pioneer, a possible point of contrast with its early years.

**Chapter 7** concludes the thesis by assessing the success, distinctiveness and modernity – or otherwise - of the PTA. While not as innovative as it often claimed, particularly after 1911, the PTA adapted and evolved into a substantial, long-serving and respected firm, whose brand name survived in a new form into the 1970s. It played a significant role in the development of modern British travel and tourism.

## Chapter 2: The origins of the PTA

### Overview

To understand the origins of the PTA, and its later history, we have to consider the early years of its parent institution, Quintin Hogg's Polytechnic (later known as the Regent Street Polytechnic then, from 1970, as the Polytechnic of Central London or PCL, and finally from 1992 as the University of Westminster). In the 1880s the Polytechnic was still frequently referred to as 'the Young Men's Christian Institute' or 'the Institute'. Later this term became more associated with the social side of the Polytechnic. 'Regent Street Polytechnic' was more frequently used after the creation of other polytechnics in the early 1890s, although this thesis will refer to 'the Polytechnic' for the sake of simplicity. The Polytechnic was born in London, a city whose late nineteenth century significance as a centre of trade, empire, employment and philanthropy drew in lower middle class and working-class commuters from a gradually widening catchment area. Steadily increasing levels of disposable income and free time encouraged new leisure hobbies, including sports and travel to the south-east of England and to continental Europe.

The motifs of trade, self-improvement, empire, philanthropy, religious belief, sport and travel found their reflections in the emerging Polytechnic and – in varying degrees – in three of its leaders: Quintin Hogg, Robert Mitchell and JEK Studd. Hogg, Mitchell and Studd all played significant roles in the gestation of the PTA and the last two (with Hogg's son Douglas) were the original owners of the firm when it acquired separate legal status in 1911. They shared key beliefs and assumptions relating to the social and moral benefits of sport and leisure activities in the all-round development of the individual. They oversaw the development of the Polytechnic in its early years, as its combination of classes, clubs and societies grew rapidly, meeting the educational and social needs of skilled working class and lower middle class members and students. By 1891 the Polytechnic's success had secured external capital funding and continuing annual financial support, and it had acted as a model for the creation of other new polytechnics. Herein lay the origin of a long-running theme in its own self-image: the Poly as pioneer, a creator of modernity – a self-image which the PTA attempted to emulate.

Members of the Polytechnic began to take holidays in groups for some time before the institution itself organised official excursions. These self-organised trips generated reports in the inhouse magazine and contributed to what Michele Strong



has called the Polytechnic's 'spirit of travel'.<sup>1</sup> When the Polytechnic began to run official holidays, certain key themes emerged, particularly educational travel abroad, as exemplified by journeys to Switzerland in 1888 and the Paris Exposition in 1889. While the Swiss trip passed into the Polytechnic's and the PTA's own mythology as the genesis of the PTA, the Paris Exposition of the following year was in some respects more significant for its scale and impact on the Polytechnic and the consideration of including non-members. Meanwhile, the increasing use of holiday homes within the UK - foreshadowed by the use of a holiday home in Brighton by Hogg in 1872 - had a philanthropic aspect, as shown by the establishment of a Holiday by Proxy Fund.

The Polytechnic was not the only British organisation to begin running touring operations in the last quarter of the century. Several sprang up out of non-commercial motivations. Most, if not all of them, contributed to the appeal of travel as a 'rational recreation' counter-attraction, albeit in differing ways and on varying operational scales. Toynbee Hall, a new educational institution like the Polytechnic (albeit in London's East End rather than its West End, and with an emphasis on cultural rather than vocational education), created the Toynbee Travellers' Club for its members, students and associates. One notable travel entrepreneur, Sir Henry Lunn, was a prominent member of the Polytechnic in the 1890s, was involved in leading Polytechnic tours and may not only have gained ideas and inspiration from the Polytechnic, but also its cooperation in promoting his own conferences in Switzerland. However, although the Polytechnic and its embryonic travel agency were not unique in entering the market at this time, they were distinctive in combining their educational and ideological origins with an outward-facing commercial ambition.

### **Employment, empire, prosperity, travel, leisure, charity and religion: late nineteenth-century London**

One of the most significant consequences of continuing industrialisation was increasing urbanisation and the resultant change in employment patterns. While the population of England and Wales rose by sixty per cent between 1851 and 1891, the number of agricultural labourers fell by almost 40%, chiefly due to the attractions of urban employment. Many of the new jobs were 'white collar' occupations such as

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<sup>1</sup> Strong, 'Class Trips', 115-6.

clerks, commercial travellers, national and local government workers and teachers. The 'white collar' sector accounted for 130,000 men and 69,000 women in 1851; by 1891 the totals had risen to 500,000 and 194,000 respectively.<sup>2</sup> Much of the move from the country to the city focused on London: between 240,000 – 440,000 migrants relocated to London in each decade between 1841 and 1891, with many looking for jobs, such as young women seeking positions in domestic service. A developing London transport network of railways, buses and trams, and gradually reducing fares, began to encourage some lower middle class and working class Londoners to move out to the suburbs and commute to work. London's economy did not mirror the national economy exactly, growing more slowly in terms of the manufacturing sector, for example. However, the city was crucial to Britain's increasing world share of international trade, and it was 'the world's greatest money market'. The numbers of clerks in London trebled in the thirty years to 1891, by which time ten per cent of male Londoners were white collar workers.<sup>3</sup>

London at this time was, perhaps more conspicuously than ever before, not only the capital of the United Kingdom, but the metropolitan centre of the British Empire, a centre of global circuits of production, distribution and exchange. The proliferation of imperial-themed monuments around the capital was one indication of the presence of empire in Londoners' lives. Even those whose lives did not seem to contain obvious links to Empire could imagine it, for example through contemporary writers such as Harriet Martineau.<sup>4</sup> However, perceptions of Empire included elements of increasing concern about Britain's economic and industrial competitiveness against a rapidly industrialising continental Europe – Germany foremost – and the USA.<sup>5</sup> The weakness of technical education had been the subject of Royal Commissions in 1872-5 and 1882-4. The Polytechnic and the other institutions created in its image were perceived as part of the solution to this

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<sup>2</sup> K Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation: England 1846-1886* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 19; 46.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Inwood, *A history of London* (London: Papermac, 2000), 412-5, 466, 483, 495, 549-572.

<sup>4</sup> de Sapio, "'A Reign of Steam'", 51-2. Some scholarly work of recent years has sought to demonstrate that Empire was a part of British citizens' everyday lives; for example, see Catherine Hall and Sonya Rose (eds.), *At Home with the Empire: Metropolitan Culture and the Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006). On Harriet Martineau's Empire-themed writing, see Hall, 'Imperial Career at Home: Harriet Martineau on Empire', in David Lambert and Alan Lester (eds.), *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Career in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 335-359.

<sup>5</sup> See the discussion in GR Searle, *The quest for national efficiency: A Study in British Politics and Political Thought, 1899-1914* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971), 1-15.

problem.<sup>6</sup> In part, pessimism about British prospects could be seen as following on from disappointment with the development of mechanics' institutes. After the creation of the earliest institutes in Glasgow and London in 1823, more than 200 had sprung up by 1850. However, 'a tone of middle-class condescension probably put many working men off' – along with high subscription charges and long hours.<sup>7</sup> Mid-century observers bemoaned the failure of the mechanics' institutes to reach the people for whom they were designed, although this perceived failure has been challenged by historians subsequently.<sup>8</sup>

Despite such pessimism, while the last quarter of the century saw a general economic depression in the agricultural sector, greater prosperity in the rest of the economy offset this decline. One historian has calculated that wage earnings rose by about ten per cent in the 1880s while retail prices fell by fifteen per cent. This dual pattern would continue, albeit more slowly, in the 1890s.<sup>9</sup> Cheaper imports of wheat and meat, along with economies of scale arising from the mass production of some foodstuffs, were a significant factor.<sup>10</sup>

Meanwhile, at the same time as greater net income, there came (for some groups of workers) more leisure time. While paid holidays for manual workers were still rare, the Bank Holidays Act of 1871 offered some relief from daily toil. Various voluntary agreements in the early 1870s limited working hours in certain sectors to nine per day, and 1874 and 1892 Acts limited working weeks for textile workers.<sup>11</sup> Some Londoners took their leisure further and further away from the capital. Margate, Ramsgate and Gravesend had already been popular destinations by steamboat as early as the 1840s, and middle-class Londoners began to discover Brighton by the 1850s. By the 1880s and 1890s Clacton and Southend welcomed visitors from London's East End for a day or for weekends. In his investigations, Charles Booth found growing numbers of clerks, policemen, shop workers and local government workers (who had one to two weeks paid holidays by this time) going to

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<sup>6</sup> Michael Heller, 'The Institute and the Polytechnic,' in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 47-8.

<sup>7</sup> Boyd Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People? England 1783-1846* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 173-4.

<sup>8</sup> Royle, Edward, 'Mechanics' institutes and the working classes, 1840-1860', in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 14 No. 2 (Jun 1971), 305-21.

<sup>9</sup> CH Feinstein, *National income, expenditure and output of the United Kingdom 1855-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 140.

<sup>10</sup> Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 346.

<sup>11</sup> GR Searle, *A New England? Peace and War 1886-1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 529.

the Sussex, Kent or Essex coasts.<sup>12</sup> Booth and Joseph Rowntree's research suggested that 70-85% of working class families could afford occasional trips to the seaside.<sup>13</sup> London also acted as a key terminus for increasing numbers of forays to continental Europe, with cross-Channel passages rising from around 165,000 in 1850 to 344,000 in 1869 and 951,000 by 1899.<sup>14</sup>

For those who spent their leisure time nearer home, new options, hobbies and crazes were springing up – with differing chronologies and varying levels of access, participation and social inclusivity. During this period, 'the English middle classes discovered sport and surprised themselves with their enthusiasms', although the arcane language and rules of pastimes such as lawn tennis and croquet emphasised exclusivity for those sections of the middle-class which practised them.<sup>15</sup> The new Amateur Athletics Association barred mechanics, artisans and labourers, promoting itself to 'Gentleman Amateurs'.<sup>16</sup> On a small scale numerically, but still influentially, public schools developed an ideology of sport as a tool with which to keep order, encourage team spirit and leadership and groom students for imperial service.<sup>17</sup> Breakthroughs in bicycle technology in the 1860s stimulated great interest, with the foundation of the Cyclists Touring Club in 1878 and the creation of cycling sections of temperance societies and Clarion Clubs. The latter were an outgrowth of the creation by Robert Blatchford (1851-1943) of *The Clarion* newspaper. The Clarion Clubs were also active in the growing practice of organised rambling.<sup>18</sup> In some respects they represented an attempt to 'put the social into socialism' and, later, to promote socialism through the 'international fraternity of sport'. Cycling itself became a fulcrum for 'rational' debates about the appropriate clothing for women cyclists and about whether it encouraged healthy, sober habits.<sup>19</sup> Sport became an increasingly visible adjunct to many existing organisations, with teachers, clerks and other white collar workers 'the backbone of many of the church, mechanics'

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<sup>12</sup> Inwood, *A history of London*, 673.

<sup>13</sup> Searle, *A New England?*, 554; FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 291.

<sup>14</sup> Jan Palmowski, 'Travels with Baedeker – The Guidebook and the Middle Classes in Victorian and Edwardian Britain', in Rudy Koshar (ed.), *Histories of Leisure* (Oxford: Berg, 2002), 107, 118. The 1899 figure did not include day trippers to north-west coastal towns such as Boulogne.

<sup>15</sup> Lowerson, *Sport and the English Middle Classes*, 1, 95-100.

<sup>16</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 131.

<sup>17</sup> Huggins, 'Second-class citizens?', 14.

<sup>18</sup> Roderick Watson and Martin Gray, *The Penguin Book of the Bicycle* (London: Penguin, 1978), 22, 109, 131; Prynne, 'The Clarion Clubs', 67.

<sup>19</sup> Zack Furness, *One less car: bicycling and the politics of automobility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 20-27, 34-35.

institute, YMCA or other urban petit bourgeois and artisan sports clubs'.<sup>20</sup> London and the Home Counties were at the heart of several significant developments. Lord's Cricket Ground in Marylebone hosted the meeting of county clubs on 10 December 1889 which put the County Championship on an official basis. The first Championship, the following year, featured eight teams including Middlesex, Surrey, Sussex and Kent.<sup>21</sup> A group of London clubs created the Football Association in 1863, an important step towards the codification of the game, which opened up further with the participation of northern clubs with mainly working-class memberships in the FA Cup in 1871.<sup>22</sup>

In the meantime, Victorian society had become increasingly aware of the wide inequalities between 'haves' and 'have nots'. One manifestation of social reformers' reactions was the 'constellation' of charitable and philanthropic initiatives including Sunday school treats, summer outings, soup kitchens, clothing and coal clubs, Bible classes, temperance societies, boys' brigades and savings banks.<sup>23</sup>

The 640 London charities active in the 1860s spent between £5.5 million and £7 million each year – more than the annual cost of poor relief in England and Wales.<sup>24</sup> The goal of charity was 'to bring recipients into the fold of society' by encouraging them to adopt middle class virtues – self-help in particular. The Charity Organisation Society was founded in 1869 to coordinate distribution of funds in London. Much of this activity came from the churches, no doubt partly as a reaction to 'Doubt [coming] out of the closet'.<sup>25</sup> A 'religious census' taken on Sunday 30 March 1851 to see how many went to church had found that large numbers stayed at home and that Anglicanism, the principal of four main 'slices' of Christianity at that time, attracted less than 50% of attendances. (Hoppen defined the other three slices as 'old Dissent' with sixteenth or seventeenth century origins such as Baptism, Congregationalism and Quakerism; 'new Dissent', in particular Methodism; and Roman Catholicism.) Nonetheless, denominational statistics for the Victorian era showed a rise in the numbers aligned to the Church of England and to the Methodist, Congregationalist and Baptist sects in England. When adjusted to cover Britain as a whole, a notable rise in the numbers of Roman Catholics was also apparent.

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<sup>20</sup> Huggins, 'Second-class citizens?', 24.

<sup>21</sup> *Cricket: A Weekly Record of the Game* (1889), 479; Scyld Berry (ed.), *Wisden Cricketers' Almanack 2010* (London: John Wisden & Co.), 572.

<sup>22</sup> Bailey, *Leisure and Class*, 138-142.

<sup>23</sup> Roy Porter, *London: a social history* (London: Penguin, 2000), 326-8.

<sup>24</sup> Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 343.

<sup>25</sup> James, *The middle class*, 305-314.

Christian revivalism as preached by DL Moody and others enjoyed much popularity during the Victorian era. The Church of England in particular began to make more frequent use of choirs, to hold more frequent services, to place more emphasis on congregational responses and to provide benches instead of pews. There was also a rising level of church involvement in external clubs, societies and associations. Lambeth in the 1890s had 31 Anglican and 55 major non-Conformist places of worship which supported - among other things - 58 thrift societies, 57 mothers' meetings, 36 temperance societies for children and 19 for adults, 36 debating clubs, 27 girls' clubs, 25 sports teams and 25 penny banks.<sup>26</sup> From day to day, bible readings and morning prayers remained a prominent part of many middle-class lives.<sup>27</sup> One aspect of the centrality of religion to the lives of many Victorians was a resurgence of interest in Sabbatarianism. Pressure groups including The Society for Promoting the Due Observance of the Lord's Day – commonly called the Lord's Day Observance Society – and the National Lord's Rest Day Association used various tactics to attempt to restrict Sunday activities, with their targets including cheap Sunday railway excursions. In some respects they enjoyed a degree of success, with Sunday opening for the British Museum, the National Gallery and other London museums delayed until 1896.<sup>28</sup> However, as Boyd Hilton has argued, Sabbatarianism can be seen as a defensive phenomenon as early as 1834, when Sir Andrew Agnew's Bill to outlaw Sunday sport and recreation was only narrowly defeated in Parliament, but the confidence of the opposition to the Bill indicated that '[i]n the country at large moralists were still in the majority, but... an increasingly silent one.'<sup>29</sup> As Sundays were potentially a valuable opportunity for working people to enjoy leisure time, attitudes to the appropriate behaviour for Sundays had implications for leisure.

Such were some of the main currents and eddies swirling around British and London society towards the end of the nineteenth century, as one man's efforts to provide a better future for homeless young boys in London developed into the nation's first polytechnic. That man in particular, and two other individuals, provided the key leadership of the Polytechnic in its formative years.

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<sup>26</sup> Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, 428-32, 457-66.

<sup>27</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 251.

<sup>28</sup> For a full account see John Wigley, *The Rise and Fall of the Victorian Sunday* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980).

<sup>29</sup> Hilton, *A Mad, Bad and Dangerous People?*, 587-8.

### **The leaders: Hogg, Mitchell, JEK Studd**

The outstanding individual in the early history of the Polytechnic was its founder and first President, Quintin Hogg (1845-1903). Hogg's life was threaded through with imperial and religious themes from the start. He was born in London, the youngest son of Sir James Hogg, a successful barrister who later became Chairman of the East India Company.<sup>30</sup> Quintin's older sister Annie (1832-1921) regularly read Bible extracts to him and he kept a Bible, given to him by his mother at the age of ten, throughout his life.<sup>31</sup> He went to Eton, where he formed a Bible study group, enjoyed sports and made what were to be some lifelong friendships, but did not achieve a distinguished academic record. Declining the chance to go to Oxford in favour of a year of travelling, Hogg worked instead for a tea merchant in the City of London. During this time he became interested in the plight of homeless or 'ragged' boys and, with help from his friends from Eton days Arthur Kinnaird, later Lord Kinnaird (1847-1923) and Thomas HW Pelham (1847-1916), he started a 'ragged school' near Charing Cross. The endeavour relocated to Castle Street as it grew and Annie began to help him out, holding classes for the sisters and mothers of ragged boys. Hogg 'became a keen convert to emigration' as a way '[t]o get [boys] away and give [each boy] a new start in a country where no one could throw his past at him, where he started his race unhandicapped'.<sup>32</sup> The belief in the power of emigration to give new opportunities abroad to disadvantaged Englishmen pervaded the Polytechnic long after Hogg's death in 1903.

By 1870 Hogg's wife Alice (1846-1918) was helping to teach and supervise girls who were housed separately from the boys, while evening classes were available for 'better class' boys.<sup>33</sup> Over the new few years, Hogg established the Youths' Christian Institute and Reading Rooms at 15 Hanover Street, where Hanover United Athletic Club was formed in 1874. In 1878 the Institute moved to Long Acre and was renamed the Young Men's Christian Institute (YMCI). Finally Hogg took an opportunity to buy, in 1881, the Regent Street premises of the Royal Polytechnic Institute, and the YMCI eventually became known as the Polytechnic.<sup>34</sup> Until his sudden death, Hogg was the President, benefactor and dominant personality of the Polytechnic. He was a regular international traveller, partly due to his business

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<sup>30</sup> Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, ix.

<sup>31</sup> Helen Glew, 'Quintin Hogg and his legacy', in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 7-8.

<sup>32</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 19, 25-34, 40-44, 51, 61.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, 65-6.

<sup>34</sup> Weeden, *The Education of the Eye*, *ifc*.

interests on sugar plantations in Demerara.<sup>35</sup> Hogg was also Chairman of the Anglo-Ceylon and General Estates Company, with interests in Ceylon and Mauritius, while his other directorships included a post with Sao Paolo Coffee Estates.<sup>36</sup> *Home Tidings* published – invariably as the first item in the magazine – Hogg’s letters (and occasional letters from Mrs Hogg) about the couple’s travels through Italy, India and the Far East at various points during 1879-80. Hogg’s travel accounts acted as an early template for many other letters and articles from Polytechnic tourists and tour leaders in subsequent years.<sup>37</sup> His son Douglas McGarel Hogg, later Viscount Hailsham (1872-1950), would become a one-third owner of the PTA when it was registered as a limited company in September 1911.<sup>38</sup>

For much of this period, Robert Mitchell (1855-1933) was one of Hogg’s two chief lieutenants. Mitchell was the son of a detective who had worked at the Great Exhibition in 1851. He grew up in a family which regularly attended chapel and began working life as an apprentice to a metal worker. After going to a bible class held by Hogg, Mitchell became honorary Secretary of what was then called the Institute in 1871, eventually agreeing to become its paid Secretary seven years later and the Polytechnic’s Director of Education in 1891. It was Mitchell who drew up the Polytechnic’s original scheme of technical education classes. By 1884 demand for technical training was so great that Mitchell arranged ‘elementary’ trade classes between 7am-8am each day, at a cost of one penny a day, with breakfast included. Mitchell played in the Polytechnic brass band and played the harp and flute; and, like Hogg, he was a keen sportsman, with news of his rowing exploits appearing in *Home Tidings* as early as June 1879. When the Polytechnic became involved in the running of the London Olympics in 1908, Mitchell planned the opening and closing ceremonies and the special display for the visit of the King and Queen and the French President.<sup>39</sup> Mitchell was a key figure in turning nascent Polytechnic interest in foreign travel into organised tours, and in the purchase of chalets in Lucerne, and he became a one-third owner of the PTA in 1911.<sup>40</sup> Three of Mitchell’s siblings joined the Polytechnic teaching staff; his wife Isabella (1857-1949) managed the

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<sup>35</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 221-231.

<sup>36</sup> Wood, *Quintin Hogg*, 329-30.

<sup>37</sup> *Home Tidings*, December 1879, 117-9; March 1880, 165-183; June 1880, 233-7; July 1880, 253-261.

<sup>38</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, 7.

<sup>39</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 83-93; Wood, *Robert Mitchell*, 1-11, 46-7.

<sup>40</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, 7.



Lucerne chalets for many years; and his son Robert (b.1883) and nephew Basil (b.1888) led Polytechnic/PTA tours.<sup>41</sup>

When the First World War broke out in 1914, the Polytechnic's facilities were used to train war workers: munitions workers, fitters, turners, wireless operators and so on. Mitchell was appointed an Organiser of Technical Instruction by the Ministry of Munitions in 1915, and subsequently Director of Training at the Ministry of Pensions.<sup>42</sup> He became an Honorary Major in 1916 and was later awarded the CBE. After the war Mitchell retired as the Polytechnic's Director of Education in 1922, but continued to oversee the newly-independent PTA until 1924. At his funeral, mourners recalled that his interests outside the Polytechnic had included Ambulance and Red Cross work; and that he had been a Knight of Grace of the Order of St. John of Jerusalem and a Liveryman in the Fruiterers' Company.<sup>43</sup>

The life and career of John Edward Kynaston (hereafter JEK) Studd (1858-1944), the other key figure in the early Polytechnic years, was in some respects even more remarkable than those of Hogg or Mitchell.<sup>44</sup> Studd's father, an indigo planter, master of foxhounds and racehorse owner, underwent an evangelical conversion and the three elder sons followed suit, with JEK's attendance at an American Evangelist meeting in Drury Lane marking a turning point for him.<sup>45</sup> He went to Eton and was due to enter a London firm of tea traders, but trained instead as a medical missionary before entering Trinity College Cambridge in 1880. With two of his younger brothers, he gained his 'blue' and played in the Cambridge cricket team which beat the Australians in 1882. Studd met Quintin Hogg through a religious mission and Robert Mitchell because they attended the same bible classes.<sup>46</sup> In 1885 he was asked by Hogg to join the work at the Polytechnic. Studd became honorary secretary from 1885, vice-president in 1901 and, from Hogg's death in 1903 until his own in 1944, President of the Polytechnic. Studd was the third owner, with Douglas Hogg and Mitchell, of the PTA after 1911, as well as being its Chairman and appointing his son Ronald as Managing Director. He was awarded an OBE in 1919, knighted in 1923 and created a baronet in 1929. He was at different points Lord Mayor of

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<sup>41</sup> Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, xi.

<sup>42</sup> Anthony Gorst, "'Those who did fall in": war, military service and the Polytechnic', in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 177.

<sup>43</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, Oct 1933, 206-7.

<sup>44</sup> Much of the following is based on Bernard Studd, 'Studd, Sir (John Edward) Kynaston, first baronet (1858-1944)', *ODNB*.

<sup>45</sup> Hamilton, *Kynaston Studd*, 4-5.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 34.

London, President of the Old Etonian Association and President of the Marylebone Cricket Club (then cricket's ruling body). The social and moral value of sport and an unshakeable religious belief remained twin obsessions for Studd throughout his life. In a press interview he explained sport as 'a break in the routine and dead level of existence' for many, and contended that 'man is something like a four-cylinder engine. He has a physical engine, a spiritual engine, an intellectual engine and a social engine and it is the business of man to make all four engines run'.<sup>47</sup> Three of Studd's sons and a grandson would later serve as PTA directors.<sup>48</sup>

Hogg, Mitchell and Studd's shared interest in sport, and its capacity to develop individual character, was part of an emphasis from the Polytechnic's leadership on the significance of sport which shaped the Polytechnic's later role as 'a hub of metropolitan and worldwide sports during the twentieth century.'<sup>49</sup> Sport was one vehicle for the export of Polytechnic values in the early years of organised tours. The three men also shared, from their own personal experiences, a holistic view of the potential of other social and leisure activities at the Polytechnic for personal development and fulfilment.

### **The early Polytechnic: classes, clubs and societies, membership, leadership, finance**

Even before the move to Regent Street, Hogg's Institute already offered an impressive array of classes at Long Acre. The range included mechanical drawing, arithmetic, reading, geometry, grammar, bookkeeping, perspective drawing, French, shorthand, art geometry, model drawing, freehand drawing, geography, building construction, composition/analysis/paraphrase, mental arithmetic and choir practice. Entrance fees were 1s 6d for the first subject, and an additional 1s for others. Non-members paid 4s. Within four years, the educational portfolio had expanded in several principal areas: practical trades, technical, the School of Art, vocal and general (the final category encompassing mostly desk-based subjects such as arithmetic, French, geography and shorthand). Students could learn musical instruments such as the cornet or the violin.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Hamilton, *Kynaston Studd*, 20.

<sup>48</sup> Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, x.

<sup>49</sup> Clapson, *An Education in Sport*, 5.

<sup>50</sup> Wood, *Robert Mitchell*, 11-14.

Within a few years, the Polytechnic's formal education programme had evolved with both daytime and evening classes included. A 'Middle Class School for Boys' aged from as young as eight to over-13s, with fees per term from £1 to £2 12s 6, offered the facilities of chemical and electrical laboratories, engineering and carpentry workshops and the School of Art, in addition to a gymnasium and swimming bath. An Honorary Council for the boys' school, listed in the *Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute Diary 1886-7*, comprised Hogg, Studd, Kinnaird, Pelham, WT Paton, the Earl of Aberdeen, Sir James McGarel Hogg (Quintin Hogg's eldest brother), RS Tabor, WM Campbell, FA Bevan and Edward Trotter. Day classes were held 'for ladies and gentlemen' in English, algebra, French, German, Natural philosophy, Chemistry, Greek, Latin, Geography, writing, Hindustani, grammar, organ, pianoforte, harmony, gymnastics and St John's Ambulance.<sup>51</sup>

The Polytechnic had little trouble attracting both students and members. Even before the move to Regent Street, one issue of *Home Tidings* had listed the names, addresses and occupations of 30 new members, and the names of those members who had proposed them for admittance. Five of the new members were clerks, four were composers, two were sailors and two were salesmen. Other occupations on the list included: ironworker, bookseller, printer, grocer, collar cutter, woodcarver, upholsterer, gilder, coppersmith, carpenter, instrument maker, book-keeper and cutler.<sup>52</sup> Such diverse lists of new members became a regular feature of *Home Tidings* for the next five years. By 1886, the Polytechnic was styling itself as being 'For Artizans, Apprentices & Others – The Largest Mechanics' Institute in the Kingdom'.<sup>53</sup>

Like the educational side of the Polytechnic, the social elements of the institution grew and developed. Young men from the age of 16 were eligible to join as members; the upper age limit had been 22 and would, by 1891, increase to 25 or, for ex-members being re-elected, 30.<sup>54</sup> There was an entrance fee of one shilling, initially as a registration fee to enter the name of a prospective member or 'candidate' in the 'candidates' register'. The Polytechnic was open between 5.30pm-10.30pm on every evening except on Sundays and bank holidays. A subscription of 3s per quarter – reduced to 2s per quarter by 1891 - gave members free use of the

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<sup>51</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute Diary 1886-7*.

<sup>52</sup> *Home Tidings*, September 1880, 304.

<sup>53</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute Diary 1886-7*.

<sup>54</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute Diary 1886-7*; Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 89; UWA/RSP/P53 *Rules of the Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute 1891*, 3.

library and of reading, social, chess and draughts rooms; admission to concerts, entertainments and lectures; the chance to join various clubs and societies; and 'the privilege of joining any of the classes at greatly reduced rates'.<sup>55</sup> In the earliest years, the subscription was 3d per week, with a reduction of 4s per year if the member attended classes on at least 25 occasions.<sup>56</sup> The Recreation Ground at Merton Hall was reserved for members' use. In later years, the Polytechnic created Associate and Honorary Membership categories. Associates retained ordinary members' privileges.<sup>57</sup> Honorary Members had access to the reading rooms, social rooms and lavatories, and they could enrol for classes at members' fees. But they could not use the gymnasium, vote at meetings, attend as a member the entertainments and lectures or join any Polytechnic club except the Sick Club.<sup>58</sup> The clubs and societies were run by elected committees of members, charging subscriptions and, in some cases, entrance fees. They included trade societies such as Engineering, whose members would sometimes visit large engineering establishments in and around London; sports, such as Hanover United Athletic Club (for which Studd was on the committee, chaired meetings and was captain of cricket) and the Ramblers (of which Studd was President); and military and musical clubs such as the military band, of which Mitchell was President. Pelham and Paton were either President or Vice-President of both the Hanover United Athletics Club and the Cycling Club, and Paton was President of the Total Abstinence Society.<sup>59</sup>

Meanwhile, the Polytechnic Young Women's Christian Institute (YWCI) had been established in 1888 in Langham Place to provide similar educational, social and sporting facilities for women to those available for men. This built upon earlier work by Alice Hogg and her sister in running Bible study classes for women. Classes were open to women at Regent Street from the early 1880s in various subjects, some of which (such as art) they could study alongside men. At Langham Place, the curriculum included some distinctively 'feminine' subjects such as dressmaking and cookery. So 'in terms of its offerings for young women, the Polytechnic was in some respects a pioneer'.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Polytechnic Diary 1886-7*, A-2.

<sup>56</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 89.

<sup>57</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Rules of the Institute 1891*, 8-11.

<sup>58</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute Honorary Membership card no. 12363 for Mr R White, dated 1895.

<sup>59</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Polytechnic Diary 1886-7*, inside front cover, 3-27.

<sup>60</sup> Glew, 'Women at the Polytechnic', in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 121-7.

However, this pioneering spirit co-existed with a management style and regulations which had their conservative aspects. The Polytechnic bye-laws prohibited ‘Smoking, lotteries, sweepstakes, gambling of any kind, the use of intoxicating liquors and unbecoming conduct or language’, and the discussion of any theological subject without ‘the express permission of the Committee,’ which also had to approve the formation of any new society along with its rules.<sup>61</sup> ‘The Committee’ was, in effect, a small executive management group which made day-to-day, week-to-week management decisions. Minutes survive for meetings of the Committee between 26 April 1887 and 30 April 1891, with the meetings initially weekly or fortnightly, but less frequently as time went on. Hogg attended 25 of the meetings, chairing 22; Studd attended 39, chairing 15; Paton attended 19, chairing four; Kinnaird chaired the one meeting he attended; and a Mr Staples (perhaps Evan Staples, an active member of the Polytechnic’s athletics activities) attended on six occasions without chairing. Mitchell, the most frequent attendee, was at 41 of the meetings, and chaired none. The Committee meetings discussed and made decisions on a diverse variety of operational issues, such as social rooms, wages, electrical lighting, the library, Polytechnic rules, responses to members’ letters, honorary membership approvals and staff salaries. Evidence of initial but cautious interest in finding seaside holiday homes is available from the minutes of the meeting of 26 July 1887, at which Studd reported that:

in reply to advertisements in local papers he had received several offers from lodging house keepers. He had also ascertained the whereabouts and particulars of the various YMCA homes. It was decided that notices of these be placed in a prominent place in the Institute and also printed in *Home Tidings*, the Committee however disclaiming responsibility.<sup>62</sup>

Subsequently, the Committee monitored progress on the 1888 Switzerland trip and the 1889 Paris programme. Committee members, Mitchell in particular, reported on their efforts in researching suitable holiday homes in the UK.

With a growing range of classes, clubs, societies and services came greater costs, with expenditure outrunning income from the early days of the Polytechnic.

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<sup>61</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Rules of the Institute 1891*, 12.

<sup>62</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG *Polytechnic Governing Body Minutes*, 26 July 1887, 30. NB a Governing Body as such did not meet until 24 July 1891. The minutes of the management Committee dominated by Hogg, Studd and Mitchell, up to that date, and the subsequent Governing Body minutes were kept in the same volume and are categorised together in the University archives.

Institute subscriptions, candidates' fees, receipts for the use of the swimming bath and gymnasium, library fines and income from the coffee room were supplemented by grants from the City & Guilds Institute. But still the income could not cover the costs of running the organisation, including teachers' salaries and teaching apparatus. Here, too, the presence of the senior leadership was apparent: a report to Hogg suggested that 'many reforms [to the accounts] must be introduced', and suggested that Mitchell's work on the accounts should be delegated.<sup>63</sup> From the surviving copies of receipt and expenditure statements for overlapping periods of six, 12, 15 and 18 months, a somewhat chaotic picture of Polytechnic finances emerges. Partly due to the need for capital investment at Regent Street as demand for classes continued to grow, the financial deficit reached £7,000 by 1885 and £9,000 by 1886, with Hogg's personal financial contributions keeping the organisation afloat.<sup>64</sup>

Eventually, the Polytechnic was able to source funding from outside its own doors. An 1883 Parliamentary Act had consolidated various London charities under the control of the Charity Commissioners, who could dispense about £60,000 per annum 'for the advancement of technical and social education'.<sup>65</sup> The Polytechnic embarked upon an energetic eight-year campaign combining fundraising from its supporters and lobbying of the authorities which eventually bore fruit. No doubt this was helped by Hogg's position on the London County Council (LCC), newly created in 1889 as a directly elected authority for the capital. From then until 1907, a Progressive majority, in favour of major spending and state action and with 'an obsessive prudishness in policing public morals', ran the LCC; and, as we shall see in the next chapter, financial assistance to the Polytechnic did not come free.<sup>66</sup> But for now, the priority was to secure the Polytechnic's financial position. In 1891 the Charity Commissioners approved a capital grant of £11,750 to the Polytechnic out of a total of £149,500 for it and for similar institutions which were springing up in imitation of the Regent Street original. Hogg's Polytechnic also received a promise of an annual grant of £3,500 (with twelve other institutions receiving between £400 and £3,000 per annum). Its annual deficit was now 'well under £2,000, most of which could be raised without great difficulty in the Institute itself, by means of the school, holiday tours, etc' – a significant clue to a decidedly pragmatic motivation

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<sup>63</sup> UWA/RSP/92a *Report from Gerard van de Linde to Hogg*, 17 July 1883.

<sup>64</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 100.

<sup>65</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *The Polytechnic – its genesis and present status* (London: The Polytechnic, 1892), 53-4.

<sup>66</sup> Jerry White, *London in the 20th century* (London: Vintage, 2008), 358-9.

for expanding the Polytechnic's burgeoning travel agency role.<sup>67</sup>

### **Home Tidings from abroad: early Polytechnic travels**

Even in the earliest years of the Institute, then the Polytechnic, travel was a prominent part of the lives of its members and students. In addition to the teaching of foreign languages, the reading room included travel-related content and speakers included visitors from British colonies.<sup>68</sup> Along with reports from its various sports clubs, bible extracts and new member lists, the organisation featured travel on a regular basis in its inhouse magazine, *Home Tidings*. The December 1879 issue regaled readers with letters Hogg wrote from Italy, en route to India and Ceylon, and announced that a photographic album of images from Italy was available to view.<sup>69</sup> The Hogg's' experiences in India and the Far East – which, given their eminence in the Polytechnic, could be seen as a quasi-imperial progress - took up substantial sections of the magazine in March, June and July of the following year. *Home Tidings* was the medium through which one could learn of members such as Frank Day leaving for a new life in the USA. Members who had already relocated overseas could use the magazine to update their friends on their progress, or lack of it. WH Preece's was one of the less optimistic reports, from Calcutta:

At present work here is very bad. I have got a wonderfully good situation, but I only get 80 rupees a month, and this, as you must know, goes a very little way here... so far from this being a city of palaces, I only wish I was out of it; but there are several difficulties in connection with my getting away.

In the same issue, WJ Burridge, stationed with troops in Alexandria, endeavoured to see the bright side: 'It was not all to my liking, but I thought to myself, it's all active service, and I must do something to earn a medal...' Closer to home, *Home Tidings* gave advance notice of a lecture by Pelham on 'North America and Canada' [sic] and reported on a Pelham-led excursion to Epping Forest in Essex.<sup>70</sup>

In the course of the 1880s, *Home Tidings* published more and more accounts of members' travels within the UK and abroad, which were self-organised initially.

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<sup>67</sup> Wood, *A history of the Polytechnic*, 31, 61-67. The figures are approximately equivalent to modern (2005) figures as follows: £2,000 (1890) = £119,780 (2005); £3,000 (1890) = £209,615 (2005); £11,750 (1890) = £703,708 (2005); £149,000 (1890) = £8,923,610 (2005). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Strong, 'Class Trips', 115-6.

<sup>69</sup> *Home Tidings*, December 1879, 117-9, 121.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, May 1880, 221, 223; May 1881, 58; October 1882, 200-1.

An August 1885 report of a journey to Cardiff by steamer stated that the boat's skipper had tried to shoot a penguin 'for his mid-day meal; but... the shot missed its mark'. In the same month a German instructor, one Dr Andresen, led a trip to Antwerp's international exhibition, then on to the battlefields of the Franco-Prussian War (in which he had served). Judging from a number of articles and letters in *Home Tidings*, this was less than a total success. The promised 50% discount for the Antwerp exhibition did not materialise; Andresen ran out of Belgian currency in Bruges; problems arose with train times, advertised and actual; and the group missed the steamer home from Ostend, taking instead a vessel to Dover, with the more affluent group members buying everyone's tickets. The resulting financial disputes about who in the group should repay whom – and about 'the miscalculations and extravagance of an incompetent leader' (i.e. Andresen) - rumbled on through *Home Tidings* into May 1886, with a sub-committee formed to investigate. In contrast, an Easter 1886 visit to Paris went well under the aegis of Mr SL Hasluck, an elocution teacher, 'who performed the leviathan feat of pleasing every member of the party.'<sup>71</sup> Hasluck repeated the trip the following Easter and also proposed a journey to Switzerland at the end of that July.

### **Educational travel: the first official tours abroad**

The event later mythologised by the PTA as marking its origins – the first 'official' Polytechnic foreign tour, in effect - took place in 1888. It happened as a result of a sudden inspiration by Mitchell.

Stopping to listen to a geography lesson [in the day school] one day, he asked both master and boys if any of them had seen the mountains and glaciers, torrents and waterfalls that were being described. Not one had... In 1888 [Mitchell] went off to Belgium and Switzerland, planned a walking tour by the simple expedient of following the proposed route on foot himself, cajoled or bewildered railway companies into granting extremely favourable terms, and sent out a party of sixty boys, three masters and a doctor to study the battlefields of the Franco-German War, and then to make their way to Zermatt while their geography lessons came to life before their eyes. The cost of the twenty-seven days' trip was £5 19s.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid, 8 August 1885, 85; 29 August 1885, 137-8; 26 September 1885, 200-1; 6 February 1886, 127; 20 February 1886, 183-4; 8 May 1886, 421-4. Hasluck was listed in UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, date unknown but published after 1893, 64.

<sup>72</sup> Wood, *Robert Mitchell*, 23. £5 19s 6d (as measured in 1890) is approximately equivalent to £356.35 (2005 prices). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.



The trip departed on 23 July 1888. A letter of 29 June sent to boys' parents stated that the itinerary would include Brussels, Waterloo and also 'two days at Metz and Strasbourg - thus making the trip educational as well as enjoyable.' While Mitchell was the driving force in planning the tour, he did not act alone; correspondence with parents was approved by the management Committee.<sup>73</sup> The *Polytechnic Magazine* gave brief updates as the party proceeded on its journey, reporting on 2 August that it was making good progress despite heavy snow.<sup>74</sup>

In the aftermath of the Swiss tour, a lecture by Mitchell was planned for the following January.<sup>75</sup> The Committee deemed the event to have been a success, deciding:

to send Bronze medals "for merit" to those hotels which were most accommodating - Mr Mitchell to consult Mr Woodhall and forward medals reporting to next committee meeting to whom he had sent. Also decided to issue a similar medal to Dr Jackson as a token of appreciation for his kindness in filling the post of Honorary Physician [as a volunteer]. Also decided to refund to [B/R?] J Mitchell £5, the money paid for the Tour, on account of the assistance he had rendered to Mr Woodhall.<sup>76</sup>

In April 1889, Hogg – who edited the *Polytechnic Magazine* himself at this point – was noting that there had been many enquiries about another Swiss trip, but this time for Polytechnic members. Options were under investigation, with four parties already 'virtually arranged' for July, of 25-30 members each. By late June, preparations were almost complete for sixteen-day tours at a maximum cost of £5 15s, subject to a deposit of £1. The parties would leave on 17, 18 and 19 July, staying at modest hotels due to the expense of accommodation at that time of year – though, the *Magazine* assured readers, each person would have a separate bed. As in 1888, brief updates followed as the trips proceeded. On 22 August, the *Magazine* published an account by one of the travellers, describing the stops at Brussels, Strasbourg and Basle before the final destination of Lucerne.<sup>77</sup>

In around the same period that Mitchell's moment of inspiration grew into these trips to Switzerland, the ambitions of one of the Polytechnic's many clubs and

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<sup>73</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 3 July 1888, 118.

<sup>74</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 2 August 1888, 67; 9 August 1888, 81; 16 August 1888, 99; 23 August 1888, 117.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 10 January 1889, 17.

<sup>76</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 7 September 1888, 134.

<sup>77</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 11 April 1889, 208; 27 June 1889, 368; 4 July 1889, 2; 1 August 1889, 64; 8 August 1889, 78; 22 August 1889, 112-4.

societies sprouted into a major Polytechnic visit to Paris, to coincide with the 1889 Exposition. Polytechnic parties had visited the French capital before: at Easter 1886 under Hasluck, and during Easter of 1887 and 1888, on which members who went reported for the *Polytechnic Magazine*. The 1888 trip comprised fourteen members, with the arrangements made by the secretary of a Paris branch of the YMCA.<sup>78</sup> Meanwhile, the Polytechnic's French Society was looking forward to the 1889 Exposition. The Society had formed on 3 January 1887. Within a year, it had grown from its original dozen members to over 80, with average attendance at the weekly Monday meetings growing from nine to 24. Polytechnic members could join the Society for 6d per quarter; a further charge for entrance to the meetings had been abolished to encourage growth. The principal purpose of the meetings was an educational focus on the French language, with reading, letter-writing and conversation exercises for elementary and advanced groups, though social events also took place.<sup>79</sup>

Like many other Polytechnic clubs and societies, the French Society submitted regular reports of its activities to *Home Tidings* and then the *Polytechnic Magazine*. It was as an addition to one such report on 16 February 1888 that the Society's Honorary Secretary Charles Loxton announced:

PARIS TRIP. Next year we are going to shut up the show for a week, and take a trip to the Paris Exhibition. W. Jones is appointed Treasurer to a fund opened in our Society for the purpose. He will no doubt have something to say for himself next week. I give the rules, which are as follows:

RULES FOR PARIS TRIP.

1. That the Fund be exclusively for members of the French Society.
2. That members are to pay the Subscriptions at the rate of 9d. per week.
3. The Fund to be managed by the Hon. Treasurer, who shall be under the supervision of the Committee of the French Society. The money to be invested in the Polytechnic Bank.
4. This Trip to take place in or about August, 1889, according to the convenience of the majority of members.
5. A General Meeting of Subscribers to be held early in May, 1889, to elect a Committee to make all arrangements.

Any letter left at the Barrier addressed to Mons.W. Jones, will receive immediate attention.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 12 April 1888, 187.

<sup>79</sup> *Home Tidings*, 7 January 1888, 5; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 23 February 1888, 80; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 26 April 1888, 228.

<sup>80</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 16 February 1888, 61.

Subsequent reports reminded members of the Society and the wider Polytechnic of this initiative. Within five weeks, Loxton was predicting that 'If a sufficient number join (which is more than probable, judging by the number already paying into the fund) more than one trip may be arranged.'<sup>81</sup>

Exactly how and when the senior Polytechnic leadership concluded that the Exposition visits were too large as a project to leave to one of its societies to plan is not clear: but plainly they did. By November, Polytechnic members were reading of the efforts of Mitchell 'who is in Paris making arrangements for our members' excursions to the Exhibition of 1889', in a short report on his negotiations with local authorities to secure beds and other facilities at reasonable prices. Soon afterwards, Hogg announced: 'In connection with the Paris trip next year, I may mention that the following classes have booked themselves for the weeks named:- Plumbing Class, second week in July; Building Trades' Classes, second week in August; Carriage Building Classes, first week in July; Rowing Section, last week in August. The instructors of the particular class will, in each case, accompany the party.' The French Society section of that week's *Magazine* did not mention the Paris trip at all.<sup>82</sup> The Polytechnic's plans for visiting the Exposition had thus progressed beyond the French Society to the wider membership and to designated weeks for visits by specific student groups.

Before long, the Polytechnic leadership had to reconsider the scope of the project again. Hogg complained that:

The amount of correspondence in reference to our proposed Paris trip next year is getting somewhat alarming. Letters come in by every post from different parts of the country, from secretaries of clubs, and employers of labour, etc., asking either for advice in arranging similar trips, or else to be permitted to join our own parties. This last request we are quite unable to comply with, owing to the fact that already nearly every week has been secured by one or the other of the sections or the classes. I really advise every member who thinks of going at all to lose no time in entering his name.

Letters in the same issue asked about normal Polytechnic activities during the Exposition and about the costs of staying in Paris for more than one week.

Answering the first query, Hogg stated that 'The Institute is practically closed, as far as its ordinary work is concerned, during the Exhibition period.' Answering the

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<sup>81</sup> *Ibid*, 22 March 1888, 147.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, 22 November 1888, 322; 6 December 1888, 361.

second, he listed the ‘rules’ as: ‘First, we provide for those wishing to spend a week. Secondly, we attend to the claims of those asking for another week. Thirdly, non-members, if any room remains, which is not probable.’ Not only was the Paris Exposition taking priority over other Polytechnic work, but Hogg was prepared to admit the possibility of selling places to non-members. The following week, Hogg noted that he had negotiated with the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway for cheap tickets, and that the Polytechnic could now issue tickets to smaller clubs and institutions who booked 10 or more. He called on members to help promote the event and offered ‘any number of handbills, large bills for posting, placing in windows, etc’ to help ensure the Polytechnic did not lose money overall.<sup>83</sup>

The *Polytechnic Magazine*’s extensive coverage of the Paris Exposition between April-July 1889 included advance notes of what members could do and see while in Paris, commentary on various aspects and incidents and comments and letters of thanks from those who went. ‘RM’ (presumably Mitchell) set the scene in the 25 April issue, by reporting on a preview of the event which one of the British Commissioners had arranged for him. ‘Notes on the Paris Exhibition’ struck an ambivalent tone. It looked forward to the ‘fabulous’ end result which ‘will entirely surpass anything of a similar character ever before attempted’, while dwelling at length on the chaotic nature of the preparations. The British part of the Liberal Art Section – nearer completion than the rest – was ‘well worthy of our country... there is scarcely any handicraft or profession but what has its appointed place’. Mitchell drew special attention to the display of Messrs Cobbett, the cricket-bat makers of Marylebone. However, he also observed that local labourers were obtaining wages at nearly double the standard rate and depicted ‘John Bull... well sucked, as he enters the parlour of the Parisian spider’, warning readers that the British section would be closed on Sundays. Mitchell hoped that ‘each member will sketch out his [visiting] plans in advance’ and promised help to this end through information in the *Magazine* and at social gatherings which would take place for each party, in the week before its departure.<sup>84</sup>

This mixture of anticipation, patriotic pride, anxiety to get value for money, wariness of the exploitative foreigner and eagerness to export Polytechnic values as exemplified in craft and sport ran through the *Polytechnic Magazine* coverage of the Exposition over the next few months. The 9 May issue mentioned a series of fixtures

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<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, 13 December 1888, 371, 376; 20 December 1888, 386.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, 25 April 1889, 241.

between the Polytechnic's athletes, rowers and cricketers and Parisian teams, which a Mr St Claire (not, it appears, a Polytechnic member but an Englishman based in Paris) had helped to arrange. This expatriate had, according to the *Magazine*, spent much time and effort establishing an athletics club in the city, and had had 'to struggle against strong prejudices, national customs, and the natural dislike that the ordinary Parisian entertains for physical exercise.' The local press and the Minister of Public Instruction had apparently been receptive to Mr St Claire's advocacy of the playing of cricket and other sports in public schools. However, the report noted, the major obstacle to complete success in Mr St Claire's campaign was the absence of a Saturday half-day holiday, as France 'requires for work seven to our five- and-a-half days each week.' The article concluded that 'we one and all wish Mr. St. Claire "God-speed" in the good work he has taken in hand.' By the end of the month, 'the Committee of the Polytechnic' was in a position to confirm the locations for accommodation in Paris ('At each centre a representative of the Poly, will be in residence, who will meet the parties upon arrival, and generally assist them to make the most of their visit to the French capital') and the details of railway and steamboat journeys to the French capital. The blow-by-blow itinerary for the first day's planned excursion programme, including the Grand Boulevards, the Bastille, the Hotel de Ville and the Louvre, took up three pages.<sup>85</sup>

The first 'batch' of excursionists, ninety boys from the day school, left for Paris on 31 May. As the weekly visits by Polytechnic parties proceeded, the *Magazine* began to reflect on its members' experiences and observations (interspersed, incidentally, with long letters recounting Hogg's travels in the Far East). Illuminations and firework displays drew praise for their grandness, although there were one or two noteworthy absences from the entertainment:

Notwithstanding the prettiness of the sight, it became very tame as time went on, the utter absence of music being very extraordinary. Not a single military band was in the grounds. Evidently the "bosses" of the illuminations had an eye to Protection, and would not permit competition.

To reinforce the value of following the advice given in previous issues, the 27 June issue reported the overcharging of two members for a lunch, and reminded members of the list of restaurants printed on 30 May, 'both for the quality of the meals served

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<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, 9 May 1889, 264-5; 30 May 1889, 309-312.

and the prices charged, and we cannot too strongly urge members to be very careful what other houses they use.’ The same issue recounted the cautionary tale of two members who paid two francs each, rather than one, for photographs of themselves, due to the ‘shrewdness’ of the photographer.<sup>86</sup>

In the end, the Polytechnic did not offer places on the 1889 Paris Exposition trips to non-members. Nonetheless, the numbers of Polytechnic visitors – reported as 140 a week by late July 1889, and nearly 2,500 ‘excursionists’ in all – dwarfed the numbers going to Switzerland at the same time.<sup>87</sup> Nor was this a one-off: a special May 1891 *Polytechnic Holiday Guide* reported that 4,000 people had visited Paris the previous year. For their scale, the nature and extent of the publicity and the new possibility of catering for non-Polytechnic members, the 1889 and 1890 Paris trips were every bit as significant as the Swiss journey of 1888.

Switzerland was on the itinerary again in 1890, as was Madeira.<sup>88</sup> The Polytechnic’s activities in organising official tours abroad were well and truly under way. Meanwhile, plans for trips within the United Kingdom, and the use of holiday homes both for members and for some poor members of the Polytechnic’s local community, were maturing.

### **Sea air and philanthropy: Polytechnic holidays in the British Isles and the Holidays by Proxy Fund**

In August 1872, a small house at 24 Portland Place, East Cliff, Brighton was taken for some of the boys in the care of Quintin and Alice Hogg to stay, ‘the tentative commencement of the holiday homes [later] scattered all over the kingdom’. From then on ‘the boys shared whatever autumn holiday plans Mr and Mrs Hogg made’.<sup>89</sup> From this quiet start, once Hogg’s Institute had moved to Regent Street and become the Polytechnic, a programme of holidays within the British Isles began to emerge – in the shadow of the greater amount of publicity given to foreign tours - accompanied by a healthy dose of philanthropic concern for needy neighbours.

We have already noted that, by 1887, the Polytechnic’s senior leadership had considered options for UK-based short breaks for members, albeit by publicising what was available rather than actively organising it. The following May, Mitchell

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid, 6 June 1889, 325; 27 June 1889, 369.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid, 25 April 1889, 237; 25 July 1889, 48; 29 August 1889, 123.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 6 February 1890, 78; 8 May 1890, 295; 26 June 1890, 413.

<sup>89</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 71.

agreed to find out the cost of hiring a house boat on the Norfolk Broads, while a house would be rented during July and August for the young women of the Polytechnic. Discussions took place at subsequent management committee meetings about negotiations with the owner of Beacon House in Selsey-on-Sea, Sussex and about the offer of a house in Folkestone (with Hogg deciding to pay a personal visit to the property in each case).<sup>90</sup> In terms of holiday arrangements, the Switzerland and Paris trips dominated Committee considerations for the following 18 months. However, by early 1890, plans were afoot - with Mitchell visiting properties and negotiating with their owners - to rent a summer holiday home in Hastings and accommodation at Clacton 'or some other similar seaside resort'. There would also be expeditions to Scotland and Ireland.<sup>91</sup> By late March and early April, the *Polytechnic Magazine* could publish photos of the proposed excursions to Ireland and inform members that their non-member friends could join the trips for a premium of 5s on the standard weekly member fee of £3 5s. A special 16-page supplement on 26 June gave details not only of trips to Switzerland and Madeira, but of UK holiday accommodation available for members' use in Clacton; in Hastings, for members of the Sisters Institute; in Deal, at a property managed by the Diocesan Council for the Welfare of Young Men; and in Brighton, where members could make 'use of parlour, reading-room, chess, library, writing-room, gymnasium, etc., [for] twenty-four shillings and ninepence a week.'<sup>92</sup>

The UK holiday homes also became a focus for Polytechnic philanthropy. In 1889 the combined efforts of members, the boys and girls of the Day Schools and 'members of the evening congregation' had raised money for a fund which had enabled about 400 poor children to have a week or fortnight away from home in the country or at the seaside. The following year, an article in the *Polytechnic Magazine* suggested repeating this initiative, with swimmers, gymnasts and rowers putting on special events to help raise money for the fund.<sup>93</sup> The Holiday by Proxy Fund would remain a feature of Polytechnic life for years to come, providing holidays for hundreds of the less fortunate every year - as many as 600 people in 1902 at a total cost of £500.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 24 May 1888, 100-1; 4 June 1888, 109; 10 July 1888, 125.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid*, 13 February 1890, 189-190; 5 April 1890, 193.

<sup>92</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 27 March 1890, 189-92; 10 April 1892, 223; 26 June 1890, 405-420.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, 15 May 1890, 310.

<sup>94</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 156-7.

Encouragingly for the Polytechnic, its early official tours at home and abroad appeared to have a sound financial footing. Details of income and expenditure for the year to 30 June 1891 included touring income and costs for the first time. A handwritten note opposite the details of the trip to Killarney in Ireland stated: ‘This is the only trip on wh. we lost money – this year we shall make some.’<sup>95</sup>

### **Competitors, collaborators, comparators: Toynbee Hall, Frame, Lunn, CHA**

The Polytechnic was not the only British organisation to enter the holidaymaking market in the latter part of the nineteenth century. All had non-commercial starting points within a broad framework of rational recreation, although the flavours of their specific contributions to the tourist industry varied.

The closest contemporary parallel to the Polytechnic was also based in London. However, in piquant contrast to the Polytechnic’s upmarket location in Regent Street – the development of the street had cost the public purse £1.5 million – Toynbee Hall was created in Commercial Street in the city’s East End. This poor section of the capital, contemporary observers noted, lacked a higher education institution, churches were empty or half-filled and the only available entertainment consisted of pubs, billiard saloons, clubs and music halls.<sup>96</sup> Toynbee Hall was named posthumously after Arnold Toynbee (1852-1883), an Oxford historian, but founded by Samuel Barnett (1844-1913), vicar of St Jude’s in Whitechapel. Barnett had arrived in the parish in 1872 and, within ten years, he and his wife Henrietta had been instrumental in the reopening of schools; the start of adult classes in languages, arithmetic and other subjects; the building of a parish library; the founding of the East London branch of the University Extension Society; and the instigation of literary and discussion societies and an annual art exhibition. Barnett had been an undergraduate at Oxford. In a speech at St John’s College Oxford in November 1883, entitled ‘Settlements of University Men in Great Towns’, he proposed that groups of university men should take large houses in major cities such as London, with a director or head, which would be maintained by a college in a similar style to mission clergymen, and supported by graduates and undergraduates. By garnering support from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge, Barnett was able to inspire

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<sup>95</sup> UWA/RSP/P92b *Receipts and expenditure for the 12 months to 30 June 1891*

<sup>96</sup> White, *London in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*, 23-6; JAR Pimlott, *Toynbee Hall: fifty years of social progress 1884-1934* (London: JM Dent and Sons, 1935), 6-7.



the opening of Toynbee Hall in East London in 1885. In its first ten years, at least 16 residents out of approximately 80 in total either went into the church or were already clergymen (with one becoming a rabbi).<sup>97</sup>

The articles of Toynbee Hall committed it to seek 'to provide education and the means of recreation and enjoyment for the people of the poorer districts of London and other great cities'.<sup>98</sup> Within a few short years, the Hall's residents were managing elementary schools and sitting on committees for the promotion of recreational evening classes and on charity organisation society committees, as well as giving lectures to hundreds of students. Barnett believed that the lectures should be 'primarily cultural and not vocational'. Shakespeare, Elizabethan and Antiquarian Societies came into being, as did a volunteer cadet force and a teetotal social club.<sup>99</sup>

Like the Polytechnic, Toynbee Hall operated a philanthropic holiday fund for the less fortunate. The Children's Country Holiday Fund sent over 17,000 children for a break away from the city in 1888.<sup>100</sup> Toynbee Hall had also, by this time, begun to organise annual trips to continental Europe, linked to studies of the destinations. Eight students visited Belgium in August 1887 and, between 28 March and 15 April 1888, another group travelled to Italy. The chief organiser of this expedition was Bolton King (1860-1937), later a historian of the Italian unification movement. By negotiation with the Great Eastern Railway and Continental state railways, King managed to keep the cost of the trip under £12 for 17 days travel. The group visited Florence, Pisa and Genoa. Afterwards, it was decided to form the Toynbee Travellers' Club. Membership was restricted at first to students, residents and associates of Toynbee Hall, but later extended to members of University Extension classes. Months of study of the art and history of the country to be visited preceded each tour, which included lectures. Thomas Okey, the joint leader with King of the Italian tour, later claimed that Henry Lunn 'had told him that he had taken the idea of travel with a purpose from the Toynbee Travellers and put it on a commercial basis'. The frequency and scale of the Toynbee Travellers' Club tours did not match those of the Polytechnic: Henrietta Barnett enumerated 153 people as going on an expedition in 1892.<sup>101</sup> The Club's efforts would, in later years, be augmented and then superseded by the formation of a Workmen's Travelling Club.

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<sup>97</sup> Pimlott, *Toynbee Hall*, 15-18, 33-44, 51.

<sup>98</sup> Browne, 'The Toynbee Travellers' Club', 11.

<sup>99</sup> Pimlott, *Toynbee Hall*, 56-62, 78-80.

<sup>100</sup> Briggs and Macartney, *Toynbee Hall*, 28.

<sup>101</sup> Browne, 'The Toynbee Travellers' Club', 12-16.

Details of the travel agency brainchild of John Frame (b.1848) are, for the most part, elusive to modern historians. JAR Pimlott mentioned Frame only in passing.<sup>102</sup> Frame's own memoirs of over fifty years in the travel business are brief and 'not the story of my business, but of my own travels and personal experiences'.<sup>103</sup> Nonetheless they contain some useful clues as to the origins and motivations of his firm, Frames Tours. In his youth in Lanarkshire, Frame drew inspiration from a 'dominie' who had travelled to France, Switzerland and Italy, but his father wanted him to join the family firm of tailors. After a brief sojourn in England, Frame returned to Edinburgh to open a tailor's shop. However, after his father's death, he moved to Preston in Lancashire where a brother, Hugh, helped him find employment. Frame was, by now, a strong supporter of the temperance movement, which was the source of his first opportunity as a travel agent. Temperance workers from Preston were invited to join a choir of 5,000 at the Temperance Festival at Crystal Palace in 1881. Frame obtained a special two-day travel fare for them of only 5s per head – an echo, forty years on, of Thomas Cook's pioneering Leicester-Loughborough temperance train trip.<sup>104</sup> This became a regular trip to the Crystal Palace in subsequent years, with Frame organising the travel. From that point, he also began to conduct tours of the Scottish Highlands and of London. His largest party in the early years was a Preston group of 1300 people associated with the Pleasant Sunday Afternoon movement, which took a one-day tour to Ardishaig, with optional diversions to Edinburgh and Glasgow.<sup>105</sup> The other significant aspect of Frame's early travel agency work related to football, a sport of increasing popularity which had acquired a national code in 1863.<sup>106</sup> Frame organised one-day trips for fans of Preston North End Football Club. His recollection of a 'boisterous' 1913 trip to a Scotland-England international match concludes that 'it was with a sigh of relief that I saw the last trainload depart from Euston [for home]'. This and other anecdotes illustrate Frame's concerns that his clients should behave appropriately.<sup>107</sup> Frame's early forays abroad, on the other hand, were not on the same scale as the Polytechnic; he took a party of ten to the

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<sup>102</sup> Pimlott, *The Englishman's holiday*, 169.

<sup>103</sup> John Frame, *My life of globetrotting* (London: Camelot Press, 1931), 1.

<sup>104</sup> Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, 6-8.

<sup>105</sup> Frame, *My life of globetrotting*, 7-18, 35-6.

<sup>106</sup> Lowerson and Myerscough, *Time to spare*, 120.

<sup>107</sup> Frame, *My life of globetrotting*, 38-45.

1892 World's Fair in Chicago, while Robert Mitchell was organising the same event for nearly 2,000 people.<sup>108</sup>

If creating and running a travel agency provided an outlet for Frame's personal wanderlust and temperance advocacy, the same process was, in effect, no more than a by-product of the busy life of Sir Henry Lunn (1859-1939). The son of Wesleyan Methodists, Lunn studied simultaneously for the Methodist ministry and a degree in medicine. He took a six month placement at the West London Mission and worked in India as a missionary before returning to England in 1888, partly due to ill health. In 1890, he resigned as a Methodist minister, entering instead the American Methodist Episcopalian church, a position he resigned in 1895.<sup>109</sup> Lunn's lifelong interest in church reunion – and his experience of 'free and untrammelled discussion' by the Contemporary Club at Trinity College Dublin – led him to organise a Conference for senior ministers of various churches, in Grindelwald in Switzerland, in 1892. Some of the delegates asked Lunn to organise a tour to Rome; his anticipated party of 50-60 for the Easter 1893 trip became 440 in all, generating a healthy profit. Lunn organised a cruise to Palestine, Egypt, Athens and Constantinople for 1894, complete with lectures. This anticipated another cruise to the Greek islands in 1899, with lectures by prominent college Masters and Vice-Chancellors, headmasters and bishops, which became the template for the Hellenic Travellers' Club. Three years later, Lunn's friendship with a master at Harrow School led him to promote the charms of Adelboden in Switzerland to Etonians and Harrovians. Tour numbers rose in a few years from 440 for the first year to over 5,000, occupying around thirty hotels in the resort. Thus began the Public Schools Alpine Sports Club, whose benefits one member summed up as 'the old kind of comradeship which [had] formerly existed in Switzerland' before the country had been 'buried under... mountains of hotels'.<sup>110</sup> A recent historian of Alpine tourism has drawn attention to the preponderance of people of independent means on Lunn's Swiss tours, and has argued that Lunn formed the Public Schools Alpine Sports Club 'to escape the potential stigma that could have been attached to his clients travelling as part of an organised tour. Organised tours carried middle-class associations...'<sup>111</sup> In this sense, Lunn's tours could be seen as aiming for a distinctive segment of the holidaymaking market in comparison with the Polytechnic.

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<sup>108</sup> Frame, *My life of globetrotting*, 56; Wood, *A history of the Polytechnic*, 57.

<sup>109</sup> Stella Wood, 'Lunn, Sir Henry Simpson (1859-1939)', *ODNB*.

<sup>110</sup> Sir Henry Lunn, *Chapters from my life* (London: Cassell, 1918), 38; *Nearing Harbour*, 53-5, 68-71.

<sup>111</sup> Barton, *Healthy living in the Alps*, 139-146.

For much of this period, Lunn had worked at the Polytechnic, having accepted an invitation to become Chaplain in 1890 at a salary of £250.<sup>112</sup> Lunn's many Polytechnic duties included holding a 'Model Sunday School Class'; conducting teacher training classes concerned with scripture; and acting as Speaker of the Polytechnic Parliament. He gained recognition as one of the senior figures in the Polytechnic or, as the *Polytechnic Portrait Gallery* put it, one of the 'Active Workers' on a comparable level to Alice Hogg, Douglas McGarel Hogg and Kinnaird. Intriguingly, Lunn was also one of those 'accompanying' (i.e. leading) Norway cruises between June and August 1891, along with Mitchell and JEK Studd.<sup>113</sup> He would, therefore, have gained first-hand knowledge and experience of organising tour parties at the Polytechnic, before the Grindelwald Conference inspired his long career in travel. Lunn resigned from his Polytechnic duties in 1898, citing the need to provide assistance at the West London Mission on a more intensive basis.<sup>114</sup> Lunn's memoirs skim over his time at the Polytechnic in a few brief pages and are not much more extensive regarding his travel agencies. No doubt this reflected their subordinate role to Lunn's passions for ecclesiastical reunion and, to a lesser extent, Liberal politics.

If Frame and Lunn's travel agency origins had a strong taste of happenstance and individual opportunism, this was – ostensibly at least – less obvious in the birth of the Co-operative Holidays Association (CHA). Again it was an individual who provided the spark, in this case Thomas Arthur Leonard (1864-1948), minister of a Congregationalist church in Colne, Lancashire. In the early 1890s Leonard began to organise walking holidays in Lake District for his church's Social Guild Walking Club.<sup>115</sup> His activities derived from his view of the Lancashire wakes which 'led to thoughtless spending of money, the inane type of amusement and unhealthy overcrowding in lodging houses; moreover, it made for vitiated conceptions of life and conduct and produced permanent effects on character.' Leonard organised a holiday for thirty young men at a house in Ambleside in 1891. Gradually, an unofficial committee of like-minded people coalesced around Leonard, and other centres opened, with the organising done from Leonard's study and by seven 'corresponding secretaries'. In 1897 the CHA became a legal entity, with Leonard resigning his

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<sup>112</sup> Lunn, *Nearing Harbour*, 33; *Chapters from my life*, 130.

<sup>113</sup> *Polytechnic Holiday Guide 1891 season*, 5.

<sup>114</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 10 August 1898, 45.

<sup>115</sup> Snape, 'The Co-operative Holidays Association', 145.

ministry to become General Secretary.<sup>116</sup> A typical CHA holiday lasted a week and featured non-optional rambles in the days, often 18-20 miles long, and lectures, recitals, country dancing and concerts in the evenings. The CHA used empty cottages for accommodation and school halls for communal activity. All holidaymakers undertook basic chores such as boot cleaning and washing up. The CHA did not offer holidays abroad until 1902 when 432 guests visited Switzerland.<sup>117</sup> CHA membership was mostly middle class, petit bourgeoisie and higher working class.<sup>118</sup> This new organisation did not operate in isolation. Leonard's former tutor John Brown Paton (1830-1911) had set up the National Home Reading Union (NHRU) in 1889, modelling it on a literary and scientific reading circle founded as part of a 'religious resort' on Lake Chautauqua in New York, USA.<sup>119</sup> The NHRU's principal aim was to raise the standard of working-class leisure reading. CHA members enrolled in the NHRU and each organisation promoted the other to its members; some local CHA branches formed reading circles linked to the NHRU.<sup>120</sup> CHA holidays, like the Chautauqua activities, 'blended social leisure activity with opportunities for informal self-improvement'.<sup>121</sup> Along with the increasingly popular cycling and rambling clubs, the CHA's holidays can be seen as part of a reaction against the alienating effects of industrialisation and urbanisation, as well as part of the rational recreation movement.<sup>122</sup> The formation of the Holiday Fellowship in 1913 represented Leonard's attempt to recapture the original spirit of the CHA.

Although the CHA did not operate in London like the Polytechnic, and its guiding philosophy may have derived from different sources, clearly both organisations, along with Frames, Sir Henry Lunn's initiatives and the Toynbee Travellers' Club, could be seen as part of a wider movement towards greater travel opportunities for those who had not experienced it much, if at all, previously. This trend did not escape the notice of contemporary social observers.

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<sup>116</sup> Leonard, *Adventures in holiday making*, 19, 22-9.

<sup>117</sup> Robert Speake, *A hundred years of Holidays 1893 to 1993: A pictorial history of CHA* (Manchester: Countrywide Holidays, available from [www.historyofcha.org.uk](http://www.historyofcha.org.uk), accessed 29 January 2012), 30.

<sup>118</sup> Snape, 'The Co-operative Holidays Association', 145-151.

<sup>119</sup> Snape, 'An English Chautauqua', 217.

<sup>120</sup> Harvey Taylor, *A claim on the Countryside: A History of the British Outdoor Movement* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), 197, 210.

<sup>121</sup> Snape, 'An English Chautauqua', 229.

<sup>122</sup> Prynne, 'The Clarion Clubs', 65.

## Something new? The Polytechnic and Toynbee Hall v Cook and Gaze

By 1892, the Polytechnic and Toynbee Hall's travel initiatives had caught the attention of WT Stead (1849-1912), a pioneering investigative journalist. Stead's publicising of an 1883 London Congregational Union pamphlet *The Bitter Cry of Outcast London*, which drew attention to the levels of urban poverty and its attendant misery, was one of the inspirations for Barnett's founding of Toynbee Hall.<sup>123</sup> Stead analysed the Polytechnic and the Toynbee Travellers' Club's travel operations in an article for the magazine he edited, *Review of Reviews*.<sup>124</sup> He cast them both in sharp relief against 'regular commercial agencies' such as Thomas Cook and Henry Gaze who, in Stead's view, served the day trippers and the 'vulgar' English tourists who merely went abroad to demonstrate their own superiority. In contrast, the Polytechnic and the Toynbee Travellers' Club had opened up the world to:

many among the working classes (in the broader sense of the term), men and women of hard-working lives, moderate purses, simple tastes, modest assumptions, and willingness to learn... a deeper and wider comprehension of historical and human solidarity, and with a quickened, humbler, and more passionate perception of the quiet unobtrusive beauty lying hidden away both in external Nature and in human nature in many a highway and byway of their native land.

The Toynbee Travellers Club, in particular, had used 'co-operative principles' in widening the scope of the original plan for the 1888 trip to Italy – which was to have been limited to Genoa – into a wider cultural and historical tour which students on other Toynbee Hall courses besides the Italian group could join.<sup>125</sup>

Stead covered the Polytechnic tours in less depth than the Toynbee Travellers' Club and argued that the subsequent 'bond of union' between those who travelled together could not be as strong in Polytechnic groups, because of the far greater numbers involved. However, Stead concluded that the Polytechnic and the Toynbee Travellers Club had been founded by Etonians, making Eton:

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<sup>123</sup> Briggs and Macartney, *Toynbee Hall*, 2. Stead's campaigning instincts against conventional wisdoms also extended abroad; in *Truth about Russia* (London: Cassell & Co, 1888), he argued that Russia was 'the nearest counterpart to the British Empire to be found in the world to-day' (88) and that Britain should seek a political alliance with Russia rather than against her.

<sup>124</sup> WT Stead, 'Co-Operative Travelling: The Work of the Toynbee Travellers' Club and the Polytechnic Cheap Trips', in *Review of Reviews* vol. 5 (London, June 1892), 619-632.

<sup>125</sup> *Ibid*, 619-620.

[the] indirect parent of a far-reaching and thoroughly democratic educational movement, furnishing the means on the one hand of academic education in art and European history to working men and women, comparatively limited in numbers, who needed but to be furnished with the opportunity to claim it gladly; and, on the other, of recreational education to several thousands of the workers in the artisan and so-called lower middle class dwelling in those great towns which are commonly regarded as hide-bound in Philistinism.<sup>126</sup>

In a postscript to the article, Stead profiled the Grindelwald Conference being planned for the first time that year by Lunn, describing it as:

a definite outgrowth of the Co-operative Holiday movement. Dr Lunn had himself conducted one of the Polytechnic Norway parties, and it was during this voyage that the idea first occurred to him of persuading a number of ministers to join in a common holiday.

Lunn himself, incidentally, had described that Norway trip in an article for the *Review of Reviews* in 1891. Stead noted that the Grindelwald arrangements would cost Lunn over £1,000 personally, thereby placing the Grindelwald Conference's non-commercial driving force alongside the similarly non-profit-based motivations of the Polytechnic tours and the Toynbee Travellers Club.<sup>127</sup>

For its part, the Polytechnic was only too willing at this early stage in its travel operations to stress the educational benefits of travel:

In the old days it was part of the duties of every apprentice and tradesman to follow his trade as a journeyman, and the knowledge thus gained by travel through the provinces, and in some cases, farther afield, proved in itself an invaluable education to the craftsman of former generations. But these estimable customs of the guilds have long since passed away, and the Polytechnic holiday trips are now the workmen's only means of getting the education that travel alone imparts.<sup>128</sup>

Whether Polytechnic holidaymakers refrained from 'demonstrat[ing] their own superiority' to the inhabitants of the countries they visited, as Stead thought, was a moot point. Their own reports of their travels (as we shall see in Chapter 5) promoted themselves as the Polytechnic in distinctly superior terms and, like the Polytechnic itself, as travel pioneers.

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<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 629.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, 629, 632.

<sup>128</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *The Polytechnic – its genesis and present status*, 47.

## Summary

By 1891-2, the Polytechnic had established itself in Regent Street. It had demonstrated substantial demand for its classes and for its other services, with over 11,000 members and students on the books.<sup>129</sup> It had obtained a sustainable financial basis for future operations, surviving thanks to Hogg's largesse and then gaining formal financial support, and recognition of its status, from the Charity Commissioners. It would overstate the case to argue that the Polytechnic developed a travel agency as the British acquired an empire, in a 'fit of absence of mind'.<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, neither Quintin Hogg nor his senior lieutenants had a detailed plan to provide holidays in the UK and abroad. The foreign tours, in particular, had emerged in a Polytechnic culture which promoted travel and encouraged members to share their travel experiences. Of the two most significant tours to Europe, the 1888 Swiss expedition arose from a moment of didactic inspiration from Mitchell, while the months of visits to Paris in 1889 grew from the small acorn of a proposal for a trip for members of the Polytechnic's French Society. Both tours embraced the educational possibilities of travel, a philosophy which other emerging travel agencies shared, albeit with varying levels and directions of emphasis. Travel could help Polytechnic members and students to gain that wider education – a form of professional development – which would help them to play their parts in boosting Britain's technical skills and hence its world competitiveness: a modern solution to some of the problems of empire. Unlike Toynbee Hall, the Polytechnic had begun to consider offering tours beyond its own community of students and members.

However, the continuing growth and success of the Polytechnic tours was not free of issues and challenges. As Chapter 3 demonstrates, the post-1891 Polytechnic's new management and governance structures brought its operations, including the tours, under greater scrutiny, with some debate and dissension among the membership about the affordability of the tours and their impact on other work within the institution. The next chapter also charts how, as the Polytechnic continued to burnish its credentials as a pioneer, the embryonic PTA attempted to follow suit.

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<sup>129</sup> Ibid, 'Supplementary Information'.

<sup>130</sup> Sir John Seeley, *The expansion of England: two courses of lectures* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1884).



## Chapter 3: Growth, diversification, scrutiny, debate

### Overview

By 1891, the Polytechnic had grown, evolved and demonstrated its effectiveness sufficiently to secure substantial external funding and official recognition of its own status and as a model for new polytechnics. Holidays in the UK and abroad had expanded from self-organised expeditions of small groups of members and Polytechnic societies into the start of an officially organised touring programme, open to the public beyond the Polytechnic. This chapter analyses the consequences of these twin developments for the PTA through the 1890s and into the new century.

The UK holiday homes and foreign touring portfolio continued to grow. In some respects its development proceeded on predictable lines for a London-based operation, with south-eastern England and northern and western continental European holidays being particularly prominent. The key Polytechnic touring destinations of Switzerland and Norway were already well-established as popular places for the British, albeit possibly for those with more money and leisure time than many Polytechnic members or students. Nonetheless, Switzerland became, and remained for over 50 years, the distinctive and sizeable core of the PTA's portfolio. The perceived simplicity and purity of Switzerland and Norway carried the strong attractions of the 'pre-modern', defining Polytechnic tourists as 'modern' in contrast. While the Polytechnic promoted its tours as affordable for those of limited means, however, a selection of lengthy and more expensive holidays became available by the second half of the 1890s. The growth of the tours led the senior leadership to rely on the efforts of key individuals at a lower level to help to run and promote the tours. The post-1891 arrangements for the governance and management of the Polytechnic obliged the senior leadership to explain and justify their plans to a new Governing Body with external representation, which wanted to limit or eliminate any liability to itself, and to an Institute Council with cross-Polytechnic representation, members of whom queried the perceived affordability of tours, the possible neglect of members in favour of non-members, the choice of specific destinations and the overall impact on Polytechnic activities. These debates – discernible in the minutes of the Council and the Finance & General Purposes Committee and in the inhouse magazine – sometimes placed different Polytechnic players on opposite sides of the traveller / tourist dichotomy.

## **Polytechnic tour destinations**

The *Polytechnic Magazine*, relevant minutes, Polytechnic holiday brochures and other materials all provide valuable evidence with which to examine the growth of the holiday programme, abroad and within the British Isles. Clearly there are limits to the conclusions which can be drawn. Brochures survive for only a very limited selection of the 1890s and 1900s. Also, evidence of the promotion of a particular tour does not, by itself, prove that the tour actually ran – although many brief references, accounts and travelogues in the *Magazine* are useful in this respect. Nonetheless, it is possible to construct a general picture of the growth of the touring programme, in which the Polytechnic moved into foreign holiday destinations which were already relatively accessible and well-established – albeit in some cases for those on higher incomes and with more leisure time than the ‘typical’ Polytechnic member, student or customer. The evolution of the tour programme also appears to have been responsive to concerns within the Polytechnic, sometimes expressed by individuals and sometimes raised at the Institute Council. Finally, just as the 1889 Paris tours had their origins in the interests of the Polytechnic’s French Society, subsequent additions to the touring programme owed something to the activities of Polytechnic clubs and societies such as the Ramblers and the Reading Circle.

### *Continental Europe and beyond*

The most prominent extra-British locations in early official Polytechnic tours were Switzerland and Norway. The Polytechnic was not the first British travel agency to reach either country. Several historians have analysed these countries’ pre-Polytechnic development as tourist resorts for the British. Jim Ring pinpointed the success of Albert Smith and the Alpine Club in popularising Switzerland for British visitors, as well as the underpinning praise of its aesthetic qualities (such as the spiritual aspects of mountains) by John Ruskin and JMW Turner and the role of English engineers in enhancing the Swiss railway network. Thomas Cook’s first tour to Switzerland occurred in 1863 and ‘The least prosperous of Cook’s Alpine excursionists had an income in the order of £300 a year’.<sup>1</sup> Susan Barton, collating a series of case studies of individual Swiss resorts, argued that Swiss cure-houses and sanatoria dealing, in particular, with tuberculosis ‘emerged from a blending of the philosophies of romanticism and alternative medicine’. A wealthy minority of

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<sup>1</sup> Ring, *How the English made the Alps*, 46-50, 85-93.

Britons went to Switzerland for the benefit of their health, although Grindelwald, for instance, was popular with mountaineers as well as other types of tourists by the 1860s. The British who popularised winter sports in Switzerland at the end of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth were mostly of independent means and treated their resorts as an analogue of an English colony. Although facilities improved as time went on, 'The perceived simplicity and purity of the Alps became an alternative to modernism'.<sup>2</sup>

Ring's and Barton's findings on British tourist interest in Switzerland have been complemented by the work of Peter Fjågesund and Ruth A Symes, Pia Sillanpää and Kathryn Walchester on Norway and Scandinavia. Fjågesund and Symes argued that British tourism in Norway had strong roots in a longer-term interest in exploring Britons' 'Teutonic heritage' (through the Normans and their Viking origins). As in Switzerland, British engineers played a key role in developing Norwegian railways, and British steamships to Norway were operating by around 1850. By 1887 a tourist in a Bergen hotel noted 559 English or Scottish names in the visitors' book compared with nine Germans, seven Australians, four Danes, three Dutch, two Russians and two Cubans. Contemporary travelogues praised Norwegians as 'a simple people living in harmony with nature and blissfully uncorrupted by the wiles of civilization' and the Norwegian landscape as 'a nostalgic echo of a virginal, unblemished world' almost devoid of people. As Fjågesund and Symes put it, the perceived picture of Norway as a tourist destination provided 'an ideal prerequisite for the imperialist [or] possessive gaze'. Norway was also ideal for active sportsmen, especially those who enjoyed shooting and fishing.<sup>3</sup> Sillanpää divided 'the Scandinavian sporting tour' into three broad eras. In the 'age of discovery and exploration' (c.1830-1850), British sporting gentlemen found, in Norway in particular, 'good, untrodden sporting grounds' to replace those in England, Scotland and Ireland which had become in their perception 'overcrowded or proscribed'. One such gentleman thought that someone who travelled the length of Norway was a genuine traveller, not as much as Asiatic or African explorers but 'far above [the rank] of the ordinary continental tourist'. The next thirty years of 'secretiveness and inundation' marked the contracts between local landowners and British sportsmen giving the latter sole sporting rights to an area, the inclusion of

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<sup>2</sup> Barton, *Healthy living in the Alps*, 6-8, 96, 112, 138-155.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Fjågesund and Ruth A Symes, *The Northern Utopia: British Perceptions of Norway in the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2003), 70, 77-9, 92, 114-136, 161, 289-292.

Scandinavia in Thomas Cook's tours for the first time and an 1877 law to restrict sport in Norway which may have led to 'over-spill' into Sweden. Finally, the years between c.1880-1920 were 'the age of the titled and tourists' with steamboats from Britain building the tourism industry – and the region losing some of its exotic attraction.<sup>4</sup> In her analysis of two travel texts by women authors of the 1880s, Walchester noted that one author's attempts to separate herself rhetorically from large tourist groups paradoxically drew attention to those groups: 'the narrators... need the crowd, rhetorically speaking, in order to present themselves as superior to it'. While both texts had a number of 'anti-tourist' characteristics, the authors did not deny their status as tourists, recording conventional experiences such as witnessing the midnight sun and staying at tourist hotels.<sup>5</sup>

In short, the course of the nineteenth century saw the rise of Switzerland and Norway as 'pre-modern', non-urban places in which to escape some of the stresses of modern industrialised life and, by the closing years of the century, they had opened up to a wider clientele from further down the social scale. For Polytechnic parties, these destinations offered the opportunity to follow Polytechnic hobbies and passions and to display Polytechnic virtues and values. Switzerland and Norway absorbed more Polytechnic tourists than any other destination during the 1890s. Out of 5,314 tourists in the 1895 season, 3,202 visited Switzerland and 1,148 went to Norway. The third most popular destination, a Governing Body meeting heard, was Paris with 339.<sup>6</sup> By this time, the Polytechnic had acquired chalets at Lucerne, with Robert Mitchell as the key mover in their acquisition:

Mr Mitchell, on a return journey from Rome spent a Sunday at Lucerne. In the course of a walk he stopped at a restaurant for tea, and whilst resting there was struck by the thought of what an ideal place it would be to spend a summer holiday in. He asked the proprietor whether he would consider any terms, and was told that the real owner was in Paris, and desirous of getting rid of the place. He went back to Lucerne, telegraphed an offer, which was accepted also by wire, and on the journey home worked out the expenses, details of

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<sup>4</sup> Pia Sillanpää, "'Turning their steps to some fresh and less-frequented fields: Victorian and Edwardian sporting gentlemen in Mid-Scandinavia', in *Studies in Travel Writing*, Number 3 (1999), 172-187

<sup>5</sup> Kathryn Walchester, 'Travelling with the Masses: British Women Travellers in Late Nineteenth-Century Norway and the "Anti-Tourist"', in *Nineteenth-Century Contexts: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 33:1 (2011), 22-3; 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 4 October 1895, 92-3.

arrangements, and advertisements for a week in “Lovely Lucerne” (a popular phrase which originated in the Polytechnic advertisements).<sup>7</sup>

While the Lucerne legend grew in later years, the Polytechnic had almost bought another property instead, at Mollis in the canton of Glarus, in early 1893. Hogg even announced in the *Polytechnic Magazine* that the house had been secured, and would be hosted by Mr and Mrs Nix during the summer. The new acquisition would enable the inclusion of ladies on Swiss tours for the first time.<sup>8</sup> However, Hogg soon had to retract the announcement, as there was some doubt as to whether the uncle of the lady owner of the house might sell it over her head.<sup>9</sup> While Ethel Wood’s account dates Mitchell’s crucial visit to Lucerne in 1893, the contents of the *Polytechnic Magazine* indicate that this actually occurred in 1894.<sup>10</sup> The presence of Mrs Mitchell at Lucerne throughout the holiday season from then on, and the use of Mitchell and Studd (as well as Henry Lunn) as tour leaders to Norway three years earlier, indicated that the Polytechnic’s senior leadership was well aware of the importance of the greatest assets in its touring portfolio, and keen to keep a close eye on them.<sup>11</sup>

For geographical convenience, the most suitable foreign destinations for a London-based institution were clearly within northern and western continental Europe. Paris featured as a regular target of Polytechnic visits, often for a short break of four or five nights over Easter or Christmas.<sup>12</sup> Louis Graveline, a French teacher, assistant secretary of the Mutual Improvement Society and secretary of the French Society, led tours to northern France, including five parties in the Augusts of 1901, 1902 and 1903, and one to Belgium.<sup>13</sup> Herr Seifert, a German master, led at least seven annual tours to Germany which also took place in August – presumably because he, like Graveline, would be free of teaching commitments at that time.<sup>14</sup> However, not every regular Polytechnic tour derived from top-down planning or explicit links to teaching staff expertise. Mr WE Spry-East took groups to Boulogne

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<sup>7</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 154-5.

<sup>8</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 22 March 1893, 244; 3 May 1893, Quintinian supplement, ii; 19 April 1893, 309.

<sup>9</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 5 May 1893, 43-5.

<sup>10</sup> Mitchell was reported as being on holiday to Rome via Switzerland and the Italian Lakes (*Polytechnic Magazine*, 28 March 1894, 178), with the announcement of the Lucerne holiday branch four weeks later (*Polytechnic Magazine*, 25 April 1894, 239).

<sup>11</sup> *Polytechnic Holiday Guide 1891 season*, 29 May 1891, 5.

<sup>12</sup> For examples, see *Polytechnic Magazine* 2 December 1896, 261; 17 March 1897, 128; 22 February 1899, 82-3.

<sup>13</sup> For the Belgian trip, see *Polytechnic Magazine*, June 1904, 51.

<sup>14</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 15 June 1898, 270.

for a summer weekend for at least eleven successive years up to 1900.<sup>15</sup> The first Polytechnic tour to Normandy, in 1894, was a 'special educational' tour under the aegis of the Reading Circle.<sup>16</sup> Organised excursions to the Belgian Ardennes were inspired by a 'pioneer' visit by members of the Ramblers Club in June 1891. The *Polytechnic Magazine* noted that the subsequent centrally organised trip was partly an attempt to meet excess demand for tours to Norway, and that many members were unable to obtain more than one week's holiday at a time.<sup>17</sup> This would not be the only occasion on which concerns about the accessibility of some Polytechnic tours to some members seemed to affect the planning of tours. A Netherlands holiday costing 4.5 guineas should, it was asserted, 'suit the purses of our own members'.<sup>18</sup> The issues of affordability, availability and meeting the needs of different sections of the Polytechnic community would continue to arise.

Even in the earliest days, though, Polytechnic tours abroad did not confine themselves solely to the north-western corner of continental Europe. An apparent desire among some members to essay a sea voyage had gained the credit for motivating the maiden Polytechnic voyage to Madeira in 1890 for a fortnight for £9 9s, or three weeks for £11, with members' friends, male or female, paying an additional 7s 6d. The Polytechnic authorities claimed that 'The usual fare to Maderia [sic] and back alone is twenty guineas... For teachers and others who can afford this amount, the holiday will be of an exceptional character.'<sup>19</sup> Provision for spaces for the two parties on this trip increased from an initial ten per party to 21; by the following year, the *Polytechnic Magazine* was announcing the likelihood of three parties a month through June, July and probably August.<sup>20</sup> Madeira still featured in the tours in 1897, described as a 'modern Eden' which would have cost £25-30 to visit in pre-Polytechnic days.<sup>21</sup> By then, tourists with a seafaring bent could take Polytechnic cruises to the capitals and major cities of northern Europe, including St Petersburg, Christiania (Oslo), Copenhagen, Stockholm and Hamburg.<sup>22</sup> The other regular continental destination in the late 1890s was Rome, initially announced in

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<sup>15</sup> For instance, *Polytechnic Magazine*, 25 July 1900, 42.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 23 May 1894, 298; 6 June 1894, 324; 20 June 1894, 352.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 5 June 1891, 346; 12 June 1891, 363.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 27 April 1898, 202.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 29 May 1890, 342.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 17 July 1890, 33; 24 April 1891, 255-6.

<sup>21</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/30 *The Polytechnic Co-operative and Educational Holiday Tours Programme 1897*, 45.

<sup>22</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 1 July 1896, 5; *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1897*, 22.

1894 as a 'cheap educational tour' and generally visited at Easter or Christmas.<sup>23</sup>

The Easter break was also convenient for trips which the institution ran specifically for its students, such as in 1899 when architecture students visited Rouen in France and German students toured the Rhine area.<sup>24</sup>

It would be a mistake to take the Polytechnic wholly at its own self-promoted estimation as providing new holiday opportunities for those of limited means. The same 1895 brochure which emphasised that its tours were not for those 'who can well afford to avail themselves of the more expensive arrangements of well-known tourist agents' advertised a month's cruise of the western Mediterranean for 30 guineas, and a month's cruise of the eastern Mediterranean including the Holy Land, Egypt, Constantinople and Athens for between 30-60 guineas (depending on whether the client wished to share their cabin or not). It offered four variations on a ten guinea holiday to Switzerland for members of that year's Grindelwald conference for which, as in the previous three years, Henry Lunn was the organiser.<sup>25</sup> The western Mediterranean cruise was advertised as being led by Mr Woolrych Perowne, whose name cropped up in the Polytechnic's 1897 brochure as the leader of Lunn's Christmas cruise to Palestine and Egypt. The 1897 brochure also gave a preliminary taste of 'one or more Personally Conducted Parties' on summer holiday tours of the United States and Canada, with the arrangements in the hands of Mr L Newton Smith, who was based at the 'Bureau of Travel, International Committee of the Young Men's Christian Associations' in New York. Members would be able to 'extend their Tour to any length desired.' The brochure editorial explained that the complete range of tours was 'calculated to suit a varied clientele'.<sup>26</sup> A handwritten note in the Reading Circle Scrapbook referred to two 33-day Holy Land cruises due to take place in January and February 1899, at a cost of 41 guineas per head (though the cruises did not, the note added, take place).<sup>27</sup> The timing (in termtime) and cost of these tours does not seem to have been determined to appeal to members, students and others with limited leisure time and money. It may, though, have been prudent business sense to provide holidays for a wide range of pockets; it was not unknown

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<sup>23</sup> For instance, *Polytechnic Magazine*, 10 October 1894, 180; 26 Feb 1896, 112; 29 March 1899, 154.

<sup>24</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 15 February 1899, 79.

<sup>25</sup> *The Polytechnic Co-operative and Educational Holiday Tours Programme 1895*, 2, 32-44; Stella Wood, 'Sir Henry Simpson Lunn', *ODNB*.

<sup>26</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/30, 15, 17, 71.

<sup>27</sup> UWA/RSP/P157a *Polytechnic Reading Circle Scrapbook*, 169.

for travel agencies to do so. During these years, after all, John Mason Cook was building on his father's successes by offering 'select' and 'popular' tours.<sup>28</sup>

### *British Isles: holiday homes, cruises and tours*

The Polytechnic's British Isles holiday homes portfolio began to develop on predictable geographical lines, bearing in mind the institution's London location, with the first properties at Brighton and Hastings (Sussex) and Ramsgate (Kent) on the south coast and Clacton-on-Sea (Essex) to the east. The Brighton home catered initially for unmarried members, but soon offered its facilities to working men and their families at 13s per week for adults and 6s for under-15s. Brighton was the location to which the Polytechnic's philanthropic efforts continued to send the children of poor families, with 112 children enjoying a seaside trip in 1893. By 1901 the *Polytechnic Magazine* was advertising two Brighton holiday homes: one for young men and the other, a 'temperance boarding establishment', for members generally.<sup>29</sup> Hastings was initially a holiday home for members of the Sisters' Institute, who could pay 1s a week into a Holiday Fund towards a fee of 20s for one week's stay or 35s for a fortnight. The fee was reduced later in the year and non-members could stay for a week for 16s 6d. By 1895, however, a lack of bookings led the Polytechnic to offer places at the Hastings holiday home to young men as well as to young ladies.<sup>30</sup> Like Hastings, the Ramsgate holiday home opened its doors to young ladies in the first year. By 1893, the Polytechnic had secured two buildings, one for ladies and one for young men to replace the use of Ascham College at Clacton-on-Sea. By 1896, a few married couples were also welcomed to Ramsgate.<sup>31</sup> The Polytechnic's use of holiday homes in Brighton, Hastings and Ramsgate followed a clear pattern, therefore; an initial plan to use each home for a specific, segregated section of the Polytechnic community, which widened in pragmatic fashion later.

From this basis, a network of holiday homes grew. Linton House in Eastbourne (Sussex) was in use from 1893 and, eight years later, an ex-Polytechnic

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<sup>28</sup> For example, see the *Programme of Selected Conducted Tours to the Bavarian Highlands* (1899) and, by way of contrast, "'Popular' Easter & Spring Tours, Combining Travel and Hotel to Italian Cities, the Riviera, Italian Lakes, Switzerland, the Pyrenees, Corsica, Balearic Isles, English Seaside Resorts etc.' (1908)

<sup>29</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 12 June 1890, 373; 24 April 1891, 255-6; 28 June 1893, 452; 5 June 1901, 254.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 13 February 1890, 95; 29 May 1890, 344; 31 July 1895, 57.

<sup>31</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 8 May 1891, 286; 15 May 1891, 301; 22 March 1893, 244; 1 July 1896, 2-3.



member advertised his Hastings holiday home.<sup>32</sup> Margate, in Kent, hosted holiday homes for the Polytechnic in general – including a home owned by the family of a member - and for the families nominated to benefit from the Holiday by Proxy fund.<sup>33</sup> Gradually, more homes opened for business outside the south-east. So great was the demand for places at the Jersey home and the concern that ‘all the places should be snapped up by outsiders [i.e. non-members]’ that Hogg took direct action to reserve places for members; and an Isle of Man home was also set up.<sup>34</sup> A new holiday home at Weston-super-Mare, in Somerset, opened in 1894 ‘at the desire of the Institute Council’, and a special Council sub-committee was set up to manage a home in Scarborough.<sup>35</sup>

Along with the network of holiday homes grew a programme of tours and cruises within the British Isles. Killarney in Ireland – with Dublin as a stop along the way – was a regular part of early Polytechnic tour programmes. Initially specific weeks were reserved for the Sisters’ Institute and other weeks for other members or students.<sup>36</sup> Ireland, like Switzerland and Norway, was well-established by this stage as a popular destination for English tourists. Ten new books or guidebooks about Ireland had been published each year in the wake of the Famine, along with hundreds of travel accounts.<sup>37</sup> Killarney, already a well-known location before the Famine, saw a significant increase in the number of tour parties visiting it afterwards.<sup>38</sup> In addition, a number of Polytechnic tours – for members, for architecture and engineering students or for a mixture of members and students – crossed the border into Scotland.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, very few forays into Wales appear to have been attempted: perhaps because, when they were organised, few if any members booked places.<sup>40</sup> Those with a yearning for yachting could do so on the Solent for as little as £2 10s a week, while deeper pockets and more leisure time could secure a 14-day cruise around Britain for 9.5 guineas.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, 19 July 1893, 496; 31 July 1901, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, 14 June 1899, 295; 25 June 1902, 264; April 1910, 22.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, 7 June 1893, ‘Quintinian’ supplement, ii; 27 April 1898, 232.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, 13 June 1894, 337; May 1906, 40.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, 6 February 1890, 78.

<sup>37</sup> Spurgeon Thompson, ‘Famine Travel: Irish Tourism from the Great Famine to Decolonization’, in Benjamin Colbert (ed.), *Travel Writing and Tourism in Britain and Ireland* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 164.

<sup>38</sup> KJ James, ‘Meeting Kate Kearney at Killarney: Performances of the Touring Subject, 1850-1914’, in Colbert (ed.), *Travel Writing and Tourism*, 191.

<sup>39</sup> For examples, *Polytechnic Magazine*, 3 July 1890, 1; 16 March 1898, 140; May 1906, 53.

<sup>40</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 26 June 1895, 324.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, 11 August 1897, 56-7; 22 May 1901, 238.

### **Other key workers: tour leaders, lecturers, agents, advertising**

Mitchell, Hogg and Studd could not run the Polytechnic's growing programme of holidays without assistance. As with other aspects of the institution, a significant body of key workers, many of whom were active in other Polytechnic spheres, helped to run or promote the tours.

In one important case, family played a part: Mitchell's wife, Isabella, spent the best part of thirty summers in Lucerne, managing the smooth running of the Chalets, and sometimes hosted Polytechnic groups in UK holiday homes such as West Cliff House in Ramsgate.<sup>42</sup> As might be expected, given the direct educational nature of the earliest trips, Polytechnic teaching staff featured among this body of key individuals. D Woodhall, the headmaster of the commercial division of the day school, the director of chamber of commerce classes and a teacher of arithmetic and bookkeeping, led early tours to Switzerland.<sup>43</sup> Charles Mitchell, headmaster of the technical division of the day school, assisted Woodhall on the 1890 journey.<sup>44</sup> Robert Avey Ward, director of the school of chemistry, was also present on the 1889 and 1890 Swiss tours.<sup>45</sup> As previously mentioned, Louis Graveline led tours to northern France.<sup>46</sup> Among the members, Johnny Deas was another stalwart volunteer in multiple areas. Having joined the Institute as early March 1874, he had served on the Athletic Club Committee, on the Institute Members' Committee and as secretary of the Christian Workers' Union as well as organising the Christian Workers' Lantern Society. He also joined the office staff team in 1882.<sup>47</sup> With his wife, Deas supervised Polytechnic holiday homes at Clacton-on-Sea and Ramsgate in the early 1890s, then at Weston-super-Mare and on the Isle of Man in later years.<sup>48</sup>

The tours benefitted from the activities of the Polytechnic's Reading Circle, established in 1893 to develop and share literary taste. Lectures, and visits to historic English towns, supplemented the meetings at which members of both genders discussed specific texts (a combination of cultural education and travel with more

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<sup>42</sup> Wood, *Robert Mitchell*, 24-8; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 11 September 1891, 167.

<sup>43</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, listed as no. 290; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 22 August 1889, 112;

<sup>44</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, listed as no. 185; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 24 July 1890, 50.

<sup>45</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, listed as no. 278; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 22 August 1889, 112-4.

<sup>46</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, listed as no. 122; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 21 August 1901, 69; 13 August 1902, 64.

<sup>47</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, listed as no. 99.

<sup>48</sup> Neil Matthews, 'From philanthropy to commerce: the Polytechnic Touring Association', in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 214; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 15 August 1894, 89; 26 July 1899, 46.

than a passing resemblance to the Toynbee Travellers' Club established a few years previously). The Reading Circle was led by W Scott Durrant, a clerk and tax assessor (later Deputy Accountant-General) who was also active in the French Society, Rambling Club, German Society and Mutual Improvement Society. Durrant led tours to Norway, Normandy, the Mediterranean and the Tyrolean Alps.<sup>49</sup> He stepped in at the last moment, when Mitchell was unavailable, to lead a tour to Rome.<sup>50</sup> Durrant was highly regarded within the Polytechnic and listed as one of its most influential figures.<sup>51</sup> In addition to leading tours, Durrant lectured about them outside the Polytechnic, to organisations such as the Calthorpe Mutual Improvement Society, the Lancaster Road Wesleyan Church Guild, the Woolwich Polytechnic and, further afield geographically, the Wakefield Mechanics Institute.<sup>52</sup>

Others shared the duties of external lectures. Frank Beer, a Polytechnic mathematics teacher 'who has personally conducted many of the Polytechnic tours to Italy', addressed the Henley Science & Art School prizegiving, exhibition and public meeting on the sights of the major Italian cities.<sup>53</sup> Frank Short, described in the *Bristol Mercury* as 'provincial secretary, London Polytechnic tours', entertained an audience with a speech on "An Ideal Cruise in Norway", during which 'Beautiful limelight views were thrown on the sheet, and the lecturer was frequently applauded.'<sup>54</sup> Short was one of the earliest of a network of local agents, based around the UK, who sold tickets on behalf of the Polytechnic and, frequently, other travel agencies, too. Mr W Madge of Southsea used the local press to publicise the summer 1892 and 1893 programme of Polytechnic tours and to state that he 'would be pleased to be of any service to intending passengers.'<sup>55</sup> Henry Kilner of New Street, Huddersfield, could supply 'EXCURSION AND TOURIST TICKETS' to various UK locations and tickets for parties conducted to the Continent both by the Polytechnic and by Dean & Dawson.<sup>56</sup> The latter, while a travel agency in their own right, also sold Polytechnic tickets for 'Lucerne, Chamounix, Rome, &c.'<sup>57</sup>

The Polytechnic's efforts to promote its tours internally and externally were among the main activities of another notable figure, H Samson Clark (1868-1925),

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<sup>49</sup> Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 42-3.

<sup>50</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 9 January 1895, 27-8.

<sup>51</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, listed as no. 8.

<sup>52</sup> UWA/RSP/P157a, 40, 61, 148, 190.

<sup>53</sup> *Reading Mercury*, 26 September 1903, 3.

<sup>54</sup> *Bristol Mercury*, 25 January 1898, 5.

<sup>55</sup> *Portsmouth Evening News*, 16 February 1892, 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 21 May 1898, 5.

<sup>57</sup> *Manchester Evening News*, 25 March 1899, 4.

who edited the *Polytechnic Magazine* between the mid-1890s and the early 1900s (although it is impossible to confirm definitive start and end dates). Clark's roles as editor and advertising agent, and his links with Hogg and Henry Lunn, were a vivid example of Polytechnic networks, connections and interdependence.

The Polytechnic's inhouse magazine had started life with the distinctly non-corporate name *Home Tidings* in 1879. As the Polytechnic's fame and prestige grew, and the prospect emerged of other institutions along similar lines, *Home Tidings* changed its name to *The Polytechnic Magazine* in February 1888. Its publication frequency varied between weekly, fortnightly and monthly. The content included 'Institute Gossip', promotions for coming events and reports on those past, updates from the many clubs and societies, notes from the day school, the *Quintinian Monthly* (for past students and members), proceedings of the Polytechnic Parliament (in effect a political debating club), results from sports fixtures, moralistic homilies and Bible extracts. Whichever branch of the Polytechnic most attracted a member or student, they could follow its fortunes in the magazine. A Sisters' Institute subsection appeared after the formation of the Polytechnic Young Women's Institute in 1888. In keeping with his interventionist approach to managing the rest of the Polytechnic, Hogg edited *Home Tidings* and then the *Polytechnic Magazine* himself for many years. There is no surviving definitive statement of who acted as editor in the early years on those occasions when Hogg was unavoidably absent – which invariably meant being abroad on business. However, given their key roles in helping Hogg to manage the institution and their regular presence at management meetings, it is possible that either or both of JEK Studd and Mitchell took up the editing duties.

Like many other parts of the Polytechnic, the magazine lost money. It accepted advertising in an attempt to increase revenue, and reverted to monthly publication after Hogg's death. Ethel Wood's *A history of the Polytechnic* mentioned that Hogg hired a paid editor, without naming the editor (editors?) or giving details of when and for how long they were hired.<sup>58</sup> This omission may have been slightly disingenuous, as Clark was later a business colleague of Wood in advertising.<sup>59</sup> By 1895 Clark had already been active at the Polytechnic for many

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<sup>58</sup> Wood, *A history of the Polytechnic*, 49.

<sup>59</sup> According to a document which the Samson Clark & Co advertising agency gave out to its clients in the late 1920s, its Board of Directors included Ethel Wood, who was 'associated with most modern advertising movements [and] President of the Women's Advertising Club' - HAT 21/336/1 *A History of Progress 1896-1925*, 10-11.

years, as a student (from 1883); a member (from 1885); a clerk of the Polytechnic Parliament (from February 1892); the founder and honorary secretary of the French Society (1886-7); and a member of the Institute Members Council (1892-3).<sup>60</sup> The next few years saw Clark liaising closely with Hogg, Mitchell and Studd as *Polytechnic Magazine* editor, and acting as the Polytechnic's advertising agent. These roles involved the promotion of Polytechnic tours and the use of the tours in gaining revenue for the Polytechnic itself.

Clark spent much of his time as editor tracking down copy for the magazine, including travel accounts. He wrote to Mrs Hogg to ask if she would send letters from her imminent trip to Palestine, for publication, and to GM Roche to ask for material from his lecture at the Polytechnic on 'Picturesque Ireland' in order to augment a *Polytechnic Magazine* report on the event.<sup>61</sup> Clark also occasionally offered the senior leadership ideas for the mutual promotion of the Polytechnic and the tours. He suggested to Hogg that framed notices of the *Polytechnic Magazine* and of the Polytechnic's Reception and Labour Bureau could be put up in the Lucerne Chalets and on the *SS Ceylon* and *Rollo*.<sup>62</sup>

A major part of Clark's role as editor was the soliciting of paid advertisements, in which activity he trumpeted the size and attributes of the Polytechnic as 'the largest Technical and Recreative Institution in the world, mustering 14,000 members and students mainly drawn from the west end'.<sup>63</sup> Clark tailored his marketing to the potential advertisers. He assured Jos Lucas & Co that the Cycling Club was 'about the largest in the kingdom and certainly musters more racing champions than any other club'; and he told suppliers of photographic equipment that 'during the season several thousands of people travel on the Continent under our auspices, so that you will see that the Magazine circulates among just the class of people who use photographic materials.'<sup>64</sup> All this was very much in line with the Polytechnic's self-promotion as the biggest and best at everything it undertook.

Clark attempted to use the imminence of the holiday season to obtain advertising from UK holiday homes, whether they were already used by Polytechnic members (as was the case with the New Inn, Ham Common) or not (such as the

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<sup>60</sup> UWA/RSP/P53, number 80.

<sup>61</sup> HAT ref. SAM 2-2 Letter to Mrs Hogg, 20 January 1896; letter to GM Roche, 27 January 1896.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid*, letter to Quintin Hogg, 9 April 1896.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, letter to Cochrane Brothers, 16 January 1896.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, letter to Jos Lucas & Co, 20 January 1896; letter to Messrs L Trapp & Co, 20 February 1896.

Joliffe Arms, Marsham).<sup>65</sup> On one occasion, he had to defuse the unhappiness of a potential advertiser about the Polytechnic's use of a competitor as a holiday home. Clark told Mr M Walters of Eastbourne that he (Clark) had consulted Studd about the Polytechnic's use of a home run by a Mrs Edwards:

He [Studd] reminds me that the arrangement with Mrs Edwards is not a new one as it is our recognised home for cheap holidays during the past seven years, but Mr Studd assures me that whenever superior accommodation is asked for by persons making application at the Institute your home is recommended. When I asked him as to the possibility of taking bookings at the Institute he said that the Eastbourne business was not large enough for them to deal with direct in the midst of the Tourist business but that he would continue to recommend your house for direct applications.<sup>66</sup>

By early 1897, Clark was negotiating for Walters to advertise in the 'Polytechnic Holiday Tours List' (presumably the 1897 brochure), assuring him that twelve guineas was excellent value for money as the List had a circulation of 'at least 150,000' during the holiday season. Presumably Walters thought this rate too steep, as Clark subsequently consulted Studd and offered a quarter-page spot for three guineas.<sup>67</sup>

The correspondence with Walters highlighted the fact that, by now, Clark was more than an editor. He had set up his advertising agency in early 1896 at the Polytechnic 'under the title of "Samson Clark & Co;" the "Co" being Mr Quintin Hogg, president of the Polytechnic, though this latter fact will not be made public.' Under the arrangement with Hogg, Clark would receive half the net profits of the new business.<sup>68</sup> Within three years, Clark's business had moved into new premises in nearby Great Portland Street.<sup>69</sup> (Clark clearly had an eye for a business opportunity. He reminded *Polytechnic Magazine* readers over a number of years that he acted as an agent for 'three or four of the OLDEST and BEST Insurance Companies'.<sup>70</sup>)

Clark began to operate, not only as *Polytechnic Magazine* editor, but also as advertising agent for the Polytechnic. In the latter capacity, he asked Mitchell to let him canvass for advertisements for the forthcoming 1897 brochure.<sup>71</sup> Whether or not

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid, letter to New Inn, Ham Common, 1 May 1896.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, letter to M Walters, 11 June 1896.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, letters to M Walters, 14 January 1897; 2 Feb 1897.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid, letter to AD Leith Napier, 30 April 1896.

<sup>69</sup> HAT 21/336/1 *A History of Progress 1896-1925*, 5.

<sup>70</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 27 June 1894, 377; 18 December 1901, 290.

<sup>71</sup> HAT ref. SAM 2-2 Letter to R Mitchell, 14 September 1896.

as a result of Clark's efforts, the brochure included advertisements for, among other things, Bovril ('Served Hot on Board the "Ceylon", and at the Lucerne Chalets'), Hope Brothers ('Gentlemen's Complete Outfitters'), E & T Pink ('Manufacturers of Jams, Marmalades, Jellies, Pickles, Sauces, Confectionery, &c'), Nevill's Turkish Baths and Thornton-Pickard photographic equipment.<sup>72</sup> As well as selling advertising space in the *Polytechnic Magazine* and in the Polytechnic's tour brochure, Clark placed advertising for the Polytechnic, including its tours, in external publications. He reminded Mitchell on 1 October 1896, for example, of orders for advertisements expiring on that date in, among other papers, the *Telegraph*, *Standard* and *Daily News* (promoting London University examinations) and the *Evening News*, *Chronicle* and *Mail* (promoting courses in photo process engraving). In August he had placed orders for 24-26 week runs of one inch advertisements for the Swiss tours in the *Scotsman*, the *Yorkshire Post*, the *Western Morning News* and the *Western Mail*.<sup>73</sup>

Intriguingly, one of Clark's earliest clients was Henry Lunn, for whom Clark placed advertisements externally and solicited advertising for Lunn's new magazine *Travel*.<sup>74</sup> Lunn, while still working at the Polytechnic until 1898, had begun to develop his own travel firms.<sup>75</sup> The Polytechnic's 1897 tours brochure carried four pages of advertising for Lunn's tours: a thirteen-guinea tour of Rome available all year round and cruises in or around the northern Baltic capitals and the western and eastern ends of the Mediterranean. Polytechnic tours advertised in the same brochure included visits to Rome and cruises in the Norwegian fjords, and the Lunn tours did not compete directly in terms of exact duplication of itineraries.<sup>76</sup>

### **The senior leadership and the tours**

A large capital grant, guarantees of annual funding and the newly secure status of the Polytechnic from 1891 had all come at a price. As Michael Heller has noted, royal approval of a Scheme of Administration for the Polytechnic registered it as a charity:

under the domain of the Charity Commissioners [and] legally laid out how the latter would be governed and what it could do in return for

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<sup>72</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/30 *Polytechnic Tours 1897*.

<sup>73</sup> HAT ref. SAM 2-2 Handwritten note, 18 August 1896; letter to advertising manager, *Western Mail*, 26 August 1896.

<sup>74</sup> For confirmation of this arrangement, see HAT ref. SAM 2-2 Letter to HS Lunn, 22 May 1896.

<sup>75</sup> See Chapter 2, 66-7.

<sup>76</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/30 *Polytechnic Tours 1897*, 68-71.

funding... The Institute was now controlled by a group of fifteen governors who were trustees but were allowed no personal stake in it... [this] marked the ending of Quintin Hogg's personal power over the Polytechnic.

The Charity Commissioners, through the City Parochial Foundation, provided three governors and the London County Council provided one (which increased to five in 1911). Hogg was the Chairman, and exempt from the six-year limit on office which applied to the other governors. His voice therefore remained strong and his influence dominant – but not overwhelming.<sup>77</sup> One example lay in the continuation of a distinctive religious culture, following Hogg's own approach rather than a specific denomination, despite a proviso of the 1891 grant being that it was not to be used for religious teaching. Hogg himself was reported as arguing that it was impossible to separate religious and secular education.<sup>78</sup> Religious observance remained an element of the early Polytechnic/PTA tours, as Chapter 4 will explain.

In the previous chapter we noted the close involvement of Hogg, Studd and Mitchell in planning the early UK and foreign holidays, with Mitchell in particular visiting potential UK holiday homes and negotiating with the owners and bringing the results back to the Committee for approval. From 1891 onwards, the triumvirate reported on the tours (and, of course, on much else) to the Governing Body. It was to meetings of the Governing Body that Hogg and Mitchell stated that members and students would be able to buy discounted tickets from the Metropolitan and District Railway companies for travel to and from the Polytechnic. The Governors heard of progress during Mitchell and Studd's visit to the USA to organise bookings for the 1893 Chicago Exposition.<sup>79</sup> Most of what the Governing Body learned regarding the touring operations was good news, with profits variously anticipated or reported as £2,000-£5,000 for 1893, £4,000 for 1894 and £3,000-4,000 for 1895. One meeting was told that '[a] considerable portion of [the 1893] surplus would consist of the Guinea hon-membership fee charged each person not a member of the Institute who took part in the trips and therefore made use of the Institute's organisation and work.'<sup>80</sup>

The meetings' minutes stressed that any financial risk in running the tours lay with Hogg personally and not with the Governing Body. For example, the 2

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<sup>77</sup> Heller, 'The Institute and the Polytechnic,' in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 50-1.

<sup>78</sup> Glew, 'Quintin Hogg', in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 30-4.

<sup>79</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 4 November 1892, 37; 5 May 1893, 43-5.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 5 May 1893, 45; 9 August 1893, 52; 2 November 1894, 77; 21 February 1896, 95.



November 1894 minutes reported that ‘The Chairman... proposed again handing over to the Institute the net profit from the trips during the past season which had been run at his risk. The amount would appear as an anonymous donation in the accounts.’<sup>81</sup> The anonymity prevents us from gaining a comprehensive picture of every penny invested (or risked) by Hogg. However, in 1895, a financial ‘trip summary’ showed, on one side of the balance sheet, costs of about £4,000 to buy the steam yacht *Ceylon* for running cruises to Norway; and, on the credit side, the entry ‘£4,000 Q Hogg’.<sup>82</sup> Hogg explained to the Charity Commission that he planned ‘to re-pay myself, through the Governing Body, out of profits on trips which I run at my own risk for the benefit of the Polytechnic, the amount due to me: subject to my life lasting three years.’<sup>83</sup>

The minutes of the Finance & General Purposes Committee, which met from early 1892, give further evidence of these arrangements and of the perceived profitability of the tours - and the complicated nature of Polytechnic accounts. An 1893 meeting heard that, in contrast with reports to the Governing Body which put touring profits for that year at up to £5,000, ‘The approximate profit with the excursions amount[ed] to about £6,300. It was decided that £6000 of this profit be transferred to the Institute a/c and that the loan of £5500 from the Holiday Trip a/c be written off.’ A year later, the same committee confirmed the overall arrangements and agreed that:

as the various holiday trips, entertainments etc have been carried on at the risk of Mr Quintin Hogg, the accounts shall be kept permanently as heretofore quite separate from the Institute accounts, as the Governing Body have not accepted liability, nor are prepared to do so. The Polytechnic name may however be used in view of the special rates in almost every case offered to members.<sup>84</sup>

From that point on, the financial accounts for the tours did not merit a mention in the Finance & General Purposes committee minutes (we shall consider the embryonic PTA accounts in the next chapter). However, one further indication of the importance of the touring operation to the Polytechnic’s financial future – and of some internal criticism of the effect of the tours on Polytechnic operations - appeared

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<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 2 November 1894, 77.

<sup>82</sup> UWA/PTA/1/5/1 *Polytechnic Holidays Tours Trip Summary*, 1895.

<sup>83</sup> UWA RSP/3/4 [ST45/15/16] Letter from Quintin Hogg to the Secretary, Charity Commission, 13 November 1894.

<sup>84</sup> UWA/RSP/1/FP *Polytechnic Finance & General Purposes Committee Minutes*, 23 October 1891-25 April 1900, meeting of 29 September 1893, 62; meeting of 14 December 1894, 124.

in 1899, when Mitchell told the Committee he would be away from the Polytechnic on tours-related business at various points in the coming summer:

As the income derived from this source was of such vital importance to the well being of the Polytechnic, he (Mr Mitchell) wished for permission to act as he might find expedient in the matter. He stated that most of his absence would be during the usual holidays, but apart from this he would not be prevented from attending to the Educational part of the work... He was most conscious to avoid anything which might meet with hostile criticism from outside, and although his Educational duties had hitherto been fully attended to, and had met, he believed with increased success, from year to year, he nevertheless felt that some reasonable objection might be raised to his absence from the Institute on other business, although it was absolutely necessary that he should attend to that business in the interests of the Institute itself.

Mitchell offered to resign his Director of Education post, in order to focus on the tours, if the Committee wished – an offer the Committee decided it was unnecessary to accept.<sup>85</sup> This exchange confirmed the continuing centrality of Mitchell, in particular, to the Polytechnic tours. He had inspired and planned the groundbreaking 1888 trip to Switzerland and the 1889 Paris Exposition programme, acquired the Lucerne chalets (which quickly became the most conspicuous part of the Polytechnic / PTA tour portfolio, and remained so until after World War II), and even obtained furniture and tapestries for the chalets, at bargain prices.<sup>86</sup> Mitchell was far more than a backroom planner of tours. His involvement spanned every stage: preparations and briefings, the tours themselves and reunion events. JH Freeman recalled:

Mr Mitchell's thoughtful and valuable hints given to us *en masse* [which] started us with quite a fund of knowledge – supplemented, as they were in my case (as, no doubt, in many others) by a few minutes of his valuable time – devoted to a hearty and bright personal welcome.<sup>87</sup>

Mitchell could be found taking parties to the Scottish Highlands (with TWH Pelham), to Norway and to Switzerland.<sup>88</sup> Like any good tour leader, he had to be ready for anything, whether raising the alarm in Stalheim when the party arrived at

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<sup>85</sup> Ibid, meeting of 24 March 1899, 278-80.

<sup>86</sup> Wood, *Robert Mitchell*, 30.

<sup>87</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 20 February 1890, 111.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid, 28 August 1890, 131; 14 August 1891, 94; 15 July 1896, 26.

‘the finest hotel in Norway’ to find a fire had broken out in the bakery or, later in the same trip, replacing the cook and other crew on the Polytechnic steam yacht and overseeing the catering until the boat’s arrival at Gravesend. As late as 1913, a tour of Switzerland by 40 boy scouts and their officers was ‘only... possible by the influence and munificence of Mr Robert Mitchell’, whose private launch was used at one stage to get them across a lake. Mitchell took the group to a key location in the legend of William Tell in order to recount the story to them. He was a regular presence, often a speaker and sometimes in the chair, at the reunion events (organised by destination) which the Polytechnic ran each year for those who went on its tours. No wonder one Polytechnic tourist coined the phrase ‘the perennial Mitchell.’<sup>89</sup>

Hogg and Studd were less constant visible presences on the tours, although Hogg’s money was integral to their operation. Hogg sometimes went with a Polytechnic party to Switzerland or Rome. He had been in the habit of using his country house Holly Hill to host Polytechnic parties, until it burnt down for the second time. Nonetheless, Hogg would make a tour of Polytechnic UK holiday homes in the autumn.<sup>90</sup> His presence at Eastbourne was noted in one *Polytechnic Magazine* report.<sup>91</sup> He sometimes chaired the reunion events. Studd led at least one tour to Norway in 1891.<sup>92</sup> He was a regular visitor to Scotland, spent August leading tours there and frequently chaired reunion events.<sup>93</sup> According to his biographer, he ‘very often spent his holidays with the Poly tourists. In his later years he made it a regular practice to spend a month, generally the month of August, at the Poly Chalets in Lucerne’.<sup>94</sup>

As we have seen, Hogg, Mitchell and Studd continued to be closely involved with the operational aspects of the tours. As time went on, the Polytechnic’s senior leadership also had to respond to an increasingly steady stream of criticism from within the institution.

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 10 July 1891, 19-20; 14 August 1891, 95; December 1903, 161-2; September 1913, 159-162.

<sup>90</sup> Wood, *The Polytechnic and Hogg*, 185.

<sup>91</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 30 August 1899, 101.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid*, 7 August 1891, 80.

<sup>93</sup> This will be covered further in chapter 4.

<sup>94</sup> Hamilton, *Kynaston Studd*, 45.

### **Internal debate and discussion surrounding Polytechnic tours**

In addition to the Governing Body, the Polytechnic had gained a Member's Council, sometimes known as the Institute Council. By 1905 there were as many as 37 members, twelve as nominees (presumably by the senior leadership) and the remainder elected by the various clubs and societies. The Council acted as a consultative rather than executive body, meeting once a month between November and September and holding joint meetings with the Governors a week after its own meetings. It could appoint sub-committees relating to aspects of the organisation, including the holiday homes.<sup>95</sup> The Council was a forum in which members could and did express concerns about the holiday arrangements, as well as making suggestions for new locations.

As the programme of British Isles and overseas holiday homes and tours continued to expand, a vein of criticism emerged in relation to the tours themselves. Sometimes this came from individual members; on other occasions, from meetings of the Council, as reported in the *Polytechnic Magazine*. This does not necessarily imply that Hogg, Mitchell and Studd were not making the key decisions: an adroit management team may well be able to turn complaints, or to report the content and outcomes of meetings, to its advantage. Nor does it imply that the tours were 'unpopular' *per se* with Polytechnic members and students. Nonetheless, it does suggest that in the post-1891 Polytechnic, the senior leadership had to take account of a wider range of views than before. Unlike John Mason Cook who, after his father's death, could steer the firm in a different strategic direction from Thomas without fear of significant internal criticism, Hogg, Mitchell and Studd could not act as pure 'autocrat[s] of the timetable'.<sup>96</sup>

Doubts about the accessibility of Polytechnic holidays to its least affluent members and students on the grounds of cost, and sometimes on the basis of their timing during the year, had surfaced as early as 1890. That summer's holiday homes included a camp in Deal, courtesy of the London Diocesan Council for Welfare of Young Men, for the use of Polytechnic members for 5s for a fortnight. The editorial announcing this initiative admitted that some Polytechnic holidays were too dear for 'many of our younger members'. In the following week's letters column, 'ABH' suggested that 'a large proportion of members who have to take their holidays in August' could not, therefore go to Ireland or Switzerland, and suggested a fortnight's

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<sup>95</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1905, 23.

<sup>96</sup> Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, 183.

excursion in mid-August to North Wales or any one of ‘scores of places in the British Isles’. ‘ABH’ did, however, add that members could organise such a trip themselves if the Polytechnic authorities did not.<sup>97</sup>

Council meetings became a forum in which members raised concerns about the tours. The 1891 Norway tours, it was feared, might end up catering for more ‘outsiders’ than members – a worry that informed planning the use of the Jersey home two years later, when non-member bookings were barred until after 23 May.<sup>98</sup> A Council meeting of 9 February 1892, attended by representatives of the governing body, heard a discussion about ‘the more expensive foreign trips, some of the members of the council bringing forward arguments against them which they had heard urged amongst their friends away from the Institute.’ The arguments were: that ‘comparatively few’ members could afford the £25-30 needed for a foreign holiday, or could obtain the time; that it was ‘improper’ to use Institute funds for such tours; that those who could afford such holidays could obtain them through other routes and were of ‘quite a different social position to that for which the Institute was intended’; that there should be more UK seaside holiday homes instead; and that more places should be reserved for members, with ‘their option [being] extended to a later date’. Hogg responded that (in relation specifically to the planned 1893 Chicago trip) those who could afford it would gain great educational value and that ‘the trip must not be looked upon from a holiday point of view only’; that the trips did not use Institute funds, but made a profit and promoted the Polytechnic’s work in the provinces; that aiding those outside the Polytechnic’s ‘intended’ sphere would ‘materially assist... in various ways’; that the expenses of foreign trips did not affect the establishment of other UK holiday homes; and that no member to his knowledge who had applied to go on a Norway trip had missed out. Clearly this subject rankled with some Council members, as another lengthy discussion followed a few weeks later, with a sub-committee formed to discuss suggestions for expanding the UK holiday homes and tours arrangements. However, the specific proposals of North and South Devon, North Wales and Scarborough as locations for ‘about a fortnight’s holiday at a cost of from £5 to £6’ did not make it into the Polytechnic’s touring programme for that year.<sup>99</sup> North Wales and Scarborough did not appear in the Polytechnic portfolio till 1895 and 1904 respectively. As late as 1899, another

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<sup>97</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 29 May 1890, 344; 5 June 1890, 364.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 6 March 1891, 146; 17 May 1893, 375.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 19 February 1892, 114-5; 18 March 1892, 184.

Council sub-committee was overseeing holiday homes in Eastbourne, Hastings and Margate for between 26s and 27s 6d per week. ‘As there are members who are not able to afford so much as this,’ the sub-committee also announced the taking of a home at Westgate-on-Sea (near Margate) for a week in July and three weeks in August – in connection with the Holiday by Proxy Fund:

to reserve this house entirely for members whose means are too limited to pay the full cost of a holiday... Should there be any who through sickness or other misfortunes are not even able to pay the reduced fees, the committee will be glad to consider any such application, and arrangements will be made to provide a free holiday in connection with the Holiday-by-Proxy Fund. The authorities hope that, as a result of these arrangements, none of our members will have to forgo a seaside holiday.<sup>100</sup>

It is not clear whether any members made such applications or, if they did so, how the Polytechnic responded. Nonetheless, it is a striking sign of the concern of the Polytechnic authorities that any members should be unable to afford a cheap seaside holiday. The Holiday by Proxy Fund was originally set up as a philanthropic initiative for the benefit of poor families living near the Polytechnic; here it was being used (or made available for use) for philanthropy aimed at the Polytechnic’s own members.

The interaction of the mainstream holiday home portfolio and the Holiday by Proxy Fund was the focus of dissension and debate in one other case. In July 1894 the Polytechnic announced the securing of Lewisham House, Weston-super-Mare, claiming it had done so on the basis of requests from members ‘by way of a change from... Clacton and Ramsgate’. The new home would be available between August and mid-September for 33s 6d per week. The following year, the Holiday by Proxy Fund secured a house for nominated people - at Clacton. The first party of sixteen arrived at the house on 6 July 1895.<sup>101</sup>

With Clacton’s replacement by Weston-super-Mare as a mainstream holiday home for members, the letters column of the *Polytechnic Magazine* resembled a multi-player tennis match, with various members lamenting the change and Hogg or the *Polytechnic Magazine* editor, Samson Clark, defending it. ‘FGH’ stated that ‘the fellows for whom our Institute was founded are to a certain extent neglected.’ Many foreign trips were too expensive or too tiring. Within the British Isles, the Weston

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid, 14 June 1899, 295.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid, 11 July 1894, 23; 10 July 1895, 17.

home was only available for six weeks, and hence unavailable to ‘those whose holiday does not fall within that time’. ‘FGH’ suggested a resumption of trips to Killarney or a tour of Devon and Cornwall. Hogg explained that the ‘exceptional terms’ the Polytechnic could obtain for its members depended on sufficient numbers booking the tours and that Killarney ‘left a loss’. Robert Dredge agreed with ‘FGH’, claiming that, in effect, ‘the holiday list [is] confined to the outside public, whereas the Poly boys are given only Weston or nothing.’ Dredge had seen Studd to propose tours in North Wales or the Isle of Man; the latter had insisted that ‘the majority of the Institute would prefer Weston.’ In reply, Samson Clark referred to the arrangements at Hastings, Eastbourne and Brighton ‘as well as the Ardennes trip, which is surely within the reach of a large number of our members.’ WH Jones also thought that the change from Clacton to Weston represented a drift away from serving the interests of the Polytechnic’s core membership: ‘Weston is all very well for the class of people the Institute are now arranging trips for, viz. the “well-to-do,” but it is not the place for anyone who has to work hard for a living to go to recruit their health.’ Samson Clark’s response was not sympathetic: ‘Clacton... has no recommendations either of beauty, excursions, or historical interest. The only enduring thing about it is its fresh air, and one’s enjoyment of that is largely marred by its obtrusively cockney excursionists.’ Charles Cronin supported Jones’ views and disputed Samson Clark’s description of Clacton:

I may say that the “fresh air” is *not* the only enduring thing about Clacton; such good-fellowship as was my great delight to experience at both Clacton and Ramsgate I have never before or since come in contact with on a holiday, and I, as well as others, showed our appreciation of its benefits, and our regret at its abandonment, so plainly that we almost got ourselves disliked for so doing.

He asked: ‘How many Institute members, earning 25s. a week, can afford to spend £4 8s for a week’s holiday? Those with small earnings are entirely left out in the cold.’ The Editor replied that cheaper alternatives were available and that ‘As to Clacton and its visitors, we must agree to differ.’<sup>102</sup>

Clearly Clark did not wish the Polytechnic to associate itself with ‘cockneys’ (at least, not on holidays). Gareth Stedman Jones has argued that sympathetic mid-century representations of the ‘cockney’ had given way by this time to caricatures (for example, of ‘Arry’ in *Punch*) which highlighted his loud, vulgar qualities. He

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid, 12 June 1895, 301; 19 June 1895, 320; 17 July 1895, 41; 24 July 1895, 46.

was the sort to enjoy loud singsongs in third class railway carriages, to become rowdy in his natural social habitats of music hall and pub. Stedman Jones describes a typical candidate for ‘cockney’ status as being a clerk who might earn £2 a week and be entitled to two weeks of annual holidays.<sup>103</sup> If we accept this as a plausibly accurate depiction of the 1890s ‘cockney’, no wonder one or two Polytechnic members reacted sharply to Clark’s comments; they might have felt that his description was a little too close to home. This exchange between a key manager and other members of a London-based institution placed the Polytechnic, and its members, on the fault lines of the continuing tensions between respectable lower middle class ‘travellers’ and cockney ‘tourists’.

The Clacton issue rumbled on into the new century, with *Magazine* correspondents continuing to criticise the cost of holiday homes and foreign tours as being beyond the reach of some members.<sup>104</sup> There was also grumbling about the use of commercial guesthouses rather than ‘the old Poly Holiday Home... [which] was much more suitable in every way than the alternative now offered of a week’s holiday with strangers, when the very existence of the Poly YMCI [Young Men’s Christian Institute] is lost sight of.’<sup>105</sup>

Nor could the tours escape occasional criticism as part of a wider discourse regarding the balance of activities and purposes within the Polytechnic. Charles Pratt, the honorary secretary of the Polytechnic Harriers and a member of the Polytechnic Men’s Council, used the Harriers column of the *Polytechnic Magazine* to state:

I am at one with those who consider the sociability of our Institute is being extremely neglected. If one grumbles we are asked for a remedy. This is easily found, only the trouble is to get those in authority to see it. The cause is this. Energies that would be engrossed in helping along the social side of the Institute, and in the old days did so, are now entirely taken up with the promotion of “globetrotting” expeditions, by which outsiders are mainly (in fact, solely) benefited. No doubt this sort of thing is very meritorious, and the running of a trip a guinea cheaper than Cook’s is beneficial to well-to-do men (who could easily pay the difference). When, however, this is done at the expense of our Institute, then I for one say, reasonably curtail your

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<sup>103</sup> Gareth Stedman Jones, ‘The “cockney” and the nation, 1780-1988’, in Feldman and Stedman Jones (eds.), *Metropolis London*, 286-292.

<sup>104</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 7 June 1899 and 4 June 1902, 232.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid*, 18 June 1902, 257.



programme, and come back to Institute work. Many hundreds of Poly fellows are of my way of thinking ...<sup>106</sup>

In a follow-up letter, Pratt wrote that trips 'should be curtailed or, at any rate, not be allowed to take up the whole of the energies of those who are best adapted to assist in the genuine Institute work' if they interfered with 'sociability' within the Polytechnic.<sup>107</sup> In reply, Hogg characterised criticism by Pratt and others as falling into three categories: that Polytechnic work was being 'sacrificed' to foreign trips too expensive for the average 'Poly boy'; that education was taking undue priority over other matters; and that the social side of the Polytechnic was being neglected. With regard to the first point, he stated that:

I doubt if there ever was in the Institute more sociability than at present, but, with our increasing numbers, it naturally concentrates itself more and more in sections... As for myself I have been four days a week at the Poly, all through the autumn, the other three days having been spent at one or other of the Poly Homes. Indeed, if you except my business absence last Christmas, and two short absences with Poly trips to Rome and Lucerne respectively, I have not been seven consecutive days away from the Institute for five and a half years. I say, then, that I do not think there is any foundation for the assertion that our social life has been neglected for the trips, while the trips themselves have been, not only an effective advertisement, but a source of revenue... It is far from our wish to turn the Poly, into a mere academy, and no one impartially regarding it could say that this has been done.<sup>108</sup>

In all likelihood, with such a large membership and an increasingly diverse range of activities, it would have been impossible for the Polytechnic to devise a programme of British and overseas holidays which could be completely accessible, affordable and acceptable to all its members (not to mention students and non-members). The numbers of Polytechnic holidaymakers continued to rise. Even so, these disagreements provide a suggestive indication of how, by widening the range of tours and holiday homes available, the Polytechnic risked alienating at least part of its own community. The continuing promotion of the tours as 'educational' provided a useful stick with which some Polytechnic members could beat its leaders for not giving more time and resources to other projects.

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<sup>106</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Poly Portrait Gallery*, listed as no. 217; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 2 September 1896, 99.

<sup>107</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 16 September 1896, 114.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid*, 7 October 1896, 146.

## Summary

As the century turned, the embryonic PTA continued to prosper. It was beginning to gain some recognition nationally as 'Polytechnic Tours' or the 'Polytechnic Touring Club'.<sup>109</sup> The earliest surviving reference to the 'Polytechnic Touring Association' is on a 1900 guide to a week on the Rhine – a book apparently published in German originally and translated for the Polytechnic.<sup>110</sup> The touring operations at home and abroad were firmly established at the Polytechnic – even though a little diversification had laid the Polytechnic open to criticism from within, including accusations of neglecting those whom it had attracted in the first place.

The Polytechnic and PTA were in the right place at the right time. They benefitted from the migration of significant numbers to London and its swelling suburbs, the growth for many in their real earnings, the increase for many in their leisure time and the development of transport networks – including cheap train fares for London workmen as enshrined in the 1883 Cheap Trains Act - which enabled both suburban commuting to work and leisure trips from London to many southern resorts and across the Channel. Greater London had become comfortably the world's largest city, with almost three million more inhabitants than New York.<sup>111</sup>

The growth in Polytechnic/PTA tours came in a national context of improving resort facilities, the rise of 'excursionists' and greater general awareness of available holiday opportunities. UK holiday resorts continued to evolve, with cheap electricity facilitating new features such as the Blackpool Tower in 1894 and an electric railway at Brighton.<sup>112</sup> According to Walton's analysis, the 1890s saw the growth, or at least the greater visibility, of younger and more unruly 'excursionists' spending their increased disposable income on daytrips to the seaside and attracting complaints about their behaviour.<sup>113</sup> The turn of the century saw the creation of specialist travel magazines such as *Picture Postcard: a Century of Travel*, *New Traveller's Magazine* and Henry Lunn's *Travel*.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>109</sup> *Sheffield & Rotherham Independent*, 14 June 1899, 2; *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, 30 August 1899, 3.

<sup>110</sup> *A Week on the Rhine: Describing a Polytechnic Tour from Cologne to Mayence* (Cologne: Horsch & Bechstedt, 1900).

<sup>111</sup> White, *London in the 19<sup>th</sup> century*, 77-98

<sup>112</sup> Walvin, *Beside the seaside*, 81-2.

<sup>113</sup> Walton, *The English seaside resort*, 213-4.

<sup>114</sup> Jill Steward, "'How and Where to Go": the Role of Travel Journalism in Britain and the Evolution of Foreign Tourism, 1840-1914', in John Walton (ed.), *Histories of Tourism: Representation, Identity and Conflict* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), 48-9.

### *Chapter 3*

The next chapter examines the values which the Polytechnic promoted through its holidays. It also places the pricing of the tours in a competitive context, analyses the social and occupational profile of the Polytechnic holidaymakers and dissects the nature of the emerging PTA's profitability.

## Chapter 4: Values and value for money

### Overview

As the Polytechnic's touring operations continued to expand, they faced continuing challenges, not least from a range of competitors. Extending the timeframe up to 1911, this chapter examines those challenges in order to evaluate the reality of the Polytechnic tours against the rhetoric used to promote them.

Beyond the internal tensions described in chapter 3 was another problem for the Polytechnic: the challenge of promoting its travel agency in the same terms of leadership and pioneering as its parent institution, even though it did not necessarily act as a pioneer in terms of its choice of destinations. Placing the term 'co-operative' in a historiographical context, it becomes clear that the Polytechnic's claim to be 'the pioneer of co-operative holiday tours' should not be accepted at face value - partly because of the ambiguity inherent in the term 'co-operative'. By considering the promotional text and reports of the many reunion events it held for holidaymakers, this chapter argues that the Polytechnic depicted its tours at different times not only as 'co-operative' but also as containing educational, rational, respectable and – to a lesser extent – religious elements. As mentioned in Chapter 1, most existing scholarly work on British travel and tourism of this period has covered the Polytechnic in fleeting terms, without attempting to evaluate the substance behind its own promotional claims. Analysis of other firms has generally focused on those firms in their own rights, rather than offering any comparative framework which could aid our understanding of the evolving industry as a whole. Through examination of the contents of brochures and other promotional items from the Polytechnic and from other travel organisations or clubs - specifically Thomas Cook, the CHA and Toynbee Hall – it becomes clear that, while price was a key consideration in the planning of many Polytechnic tours, they were not necessarily cheaper than those of competitors. As with the claiming of the 'co-operative' label, the Polytechnic's promotion of its tours as being the cheapest available does not stand up to detailed scrutiny.

This leads on to a question which the existing historiography of the Polytechnic has not considered in depth: who were the Polytechnic tourists? An analysis of membership data including the Polytechnic's records of candidates for membership, and holidaymaker lists, gives some indication of the profile of those who went on Polytechnic holidays. It reveals a profile which fits neatly with that of

the ‘respectable’ emerging lower middle classes. By considering this data in the light of recent scholarly research on wages and salaries, particularly for clerks, it is argued that the diversified nature of the Polytechnic’s holiday home and foreign tours programme may have been a pragmatic reflection of the nature of its client base.

This chapter also evaluates the financial records of the Polytechnic and the emerging PTA, including accounts and correspondence from the Polytechnic’s appointed accountants. It demonstrates the continuing importance of Switzerland in the holiday portfolio, in terms of tourist numbers and profits, as well as illuminating the disparity in performance between the ‘continental and general tours’ and, in particular, Polytechnic cruises. Overall, the consistent profitability of the PTA made it unique within the Polytechnic and crucial to its parent body - an organisation in continuous deficit, reliant on philanthropic donations from Hogg and others and, later, on grants from external organisations.

### **Values: a note on sources**

The principal primary sources for the Polytechnic and PTA cited in the section on **Values** are promotional brochures, promotional editorial and reports of tour reunions – the last two of which appeared in the *Polytechnic Magazine*. While the brochures have been cited in earlier chapters, a brief word on their limitations as source material may be appropriate. Relatively few brochures promoting the range of Polytechnic tours before the PTA gained independent status in 1911 have survived to the present day: editions for 1895, 1897, 1905 and 1908 (with only fragments of the 1908 brochure now available). Nonetheless, the emphasis which they place on diverse motivations for travel is revealing.

As for the reunion reports, they related to a series of events the Polytechnic ran each year for those who went on its holiday tours, organised by travel location. The first such event to be reported was a ‘social’ for members of the Young Women’s Institute in October 1889 for those who had attended the Paris Exhibition. An equivalent event for members of the Young Men’s Institute who had been to Paris took place in February 1890.<sup>1</sup> The numbers attending varied from around two hundred for a Rhine Tour reunion to an estimated 5,000 for a Swiss Tours event.

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<sup>1</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 10 October 1889, 221; 20 February 1890, 111.

Larger events had to be held in the Queen's Hall to accommodate the attendees.<sup>2</sup> As a mark of the national reach of the Polytechnic tours, reunions sometimes took place in provincial centres such as Manchester and Bristol.<sup>3</sup> Though the sequence of events at a reunion varied, its elements generally consisted of a welcome with tea and refreshments; speeches; reconstructions of the holidays using photographs, magic lantern slides and cinematographs; presentations of gifts to tour leaders; and musical performances, recitals and other diversions, often closing with 'Auld Lang Syne' or the National Anthem. Hogg occasionally chaired the reunions, but this duty, especially for larger events, fell more frequently to Mitchell or, in the case of reunions of Scottish tour parties, Studd.<sup>4</sup>

The Polytechnic did not hold reunions solely for its tourists; for example, Studd chaired in October 1905 a meeting of sixty men from the YMCA and the Polytechnic who had been engaged in missionary work.<sup>5</sup> Nonetheless, the tour reunions had their own significance. In business terms, they added several stages to the process of promoting tours. Members and students might read the publicity for a tour; go on that tour; read a report of the tour; obtain advance information on the reunion event; attend that reunion, several months after the tour; and finally read a reunion report in the *Polytechnic Magazine*. In this way, the Polytechnic could raise and maintain awareness of its tours for the best part of a calendar year. The reunions, and the reports of them, could reinforce pleasant memories, and also a diverse array of Polytechnic values. The analysis in this chapter uses the contents of 45 reunion event reports published between 1889 and 1911.

**Values: pioneering, co-operative, educational, rational, respectable, religious...**

...The Ardennes and Dutch tours will be in charge of a conductor capable of making the tour yield the greatest intellectual and physical benefit possible. The requirements and pleasures of all will receive every attention. The tours to Venice, Milan, Italian Lakes, Lucerne, and Paris are arranged in such a manner as to offer the greatest educational inducements to participate in the same, whilst every effort

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid, 29 November 1899, 275; December 1906, 183.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, 26 February 1896, 112; 24 March 1897, 147.

<sup>4</sup> For examples, Ibid, 2 October 1891, 202; December 1903, 161-2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, November 1905, 151.

is made to derive the maximum of pleasure from the various Excursions.<sup>6</sup>

As we established in chapters 2 and 3, the Polytechnic used the perceived educational benefits of travel to justify its touring operations, and Hogg defended the tours against some criticism from members that they detracted from other Polytechnic activities and, in particular, its ‘sociability’. However, by considering the evidence of Polytechnic (and later PTA-branded) promotional brochures, as well as promotional editorial and reports of tour reunion events in the *Polytechnic Magazine*, a more complex picture emerges. The Polytechnic tours’ ‘co-operative’ nature did not lie in a contemporary political use of that term, while the ‘educational’ content of the tours featured less prominently as time went on. The Polytechnic, and the tourists whose views it quoted as endorsements, considered that its tours provided pleasure and fellowship, in addition to moral or improving benefits.

The earliest surviving Polytechnic / PTA travel brochures described their holidays as ‘co-operative and educational’ and claimed that the Polytechnic was ‘The Pioneer of the Co-operative Holiday Movement.’<sup>7</sup> Between 1891 and 1911, the Polytechnic could justifiably claim to be a pioneer and a leader in various senses, either directly or through key Polytechnic figures and their networks. Over a decade after it gained charitable status and the creation of other polytechnics in its image had begun, it boasted more than twice as many members, and more than twice as many students, as the largest of the rest of the London polytechnics.<sup>8</sup> The curriculum included some distinctively ‘feminine’ subjects and in some cases allowed women to study alongside men.<sup>9</sup> In February 1896, the Great Hall hosted a demonstration of a ‘Cinematographe’ by Louis Lumière, the first-ever show of moving pictures to the public (appropriately enough for an institution promoting travel, the images included trains arriving and departing from railway stations).<sup>10</sup> In sport, Lord Kinnaird was President of the Football Association. At the 1908 London Olympics, athletes from the Polytechnic won ten medals; the Polytechnic Harriers planned and organised the marathon, with Cycling Club members helping to monitor the race; and many competitors took up an offer of honorary Polytechnic membership and used its

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<sup>6</sup> *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1895*, 3-4.

<sup>7</sup> See *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1895*; UWA/PTA/2/1/30 *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1897*; UWA/PTA/2/1/2 *The Polytechnic Touring Association Holiday Tours 1908*.

<sup>8</sup> Wood, *Quintin Hogg*, 228.

<sup>9</sup> See page 51.

<sup>10</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 26 February 1896, 107.

facilities. The Cycling Club began to win a string of national and international medals at World Championships and other events.<sup>11</sup> In terms of travel, some ‘Poly boys’ exhibited pioneering spirit by moving abroad to join informal ‘Poly colonies’, for example in the USA and Canada.<sup>12</sup>

Clearly, then, claims of pioneering were common to many areas of Polytechnic activity. Whether the tours were truly ‘pioneering’ in a ‘co-operative’ sense, however, seems unlikely, especially when we consider the contemporary context of the ‘co-operative’ term. As Peter Gurney has pointed out, the Co-operative movement achieved a widespread reach in England. Net sales from the English Wholesale Co-operative Society totalled £4.5 million in 1863, and there were three million ‘co-operators’ by 1914. However, certain key features and characteristics of the Co-operative movement bore little or no resemblance to the Polytechnic’s philosophy and *modus operandi*. Profits were divided among members according to the value of goods bought in a quarter, and membership was conferred by owning a £1 share which could be bought with an accumulated dividend. Co-operation ‘attempted to moralise economic relations’. Co-operative ‘ideologists... hoped that their movement would eventually transform competitive, capitalist society into a society based on the principles and practices of mutual association’. Beyond England, as capitalism organised itself on international lines, the wider Co-operative movement attempted to build international links, in the belief that international fraternisation would reduce the risk of war or even eliminate it.<sup>13</sup> The Polytechnic, by contrast, trained its students and members for success within the existing economic system; and its extra-curricular activities such as the Polytechnic Parliament were run in order to simulate existing social or political structures, not to transform or replace them. As an examination of promotional material (later in this chapter) and of representations of abroad in travel accounts (in chapter 5) will demonstrate, neither the Polytechnic in organising tours, nor those who went on the tours, undertook the exercise with a generally internationalist outlook.

So the question arises: in what way did the Polytechnic think its touring operations were ‘co-operative’? Neither Hogg nor the other senior leaders ever sought to answer this question.

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<sup>11</sup> Clapson, *An Education in Sport*, 37-46.

<sup>12</sup> Strong, ‘Class Trips’, 115.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Gurney, *Co-operative culture and the politics of consumption in England, 1870-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 19-29, 90-101, 209.



There may be two possible solutions. In his 1892 *Review of Reviews* article about 'Co-Operative Travelling', WT Stead had commented that:

Under modern conditions of life it was of course quite out of the question for any half dozen to go alone, on account of the heavy expense. But the expense might be very considerably lessened by adopting co-operative principles. Why should not the members of the Mazzini class throw open their plan to the students attending some of the other classes? And why not include in the pilgrimage places of wider general, historical, and artistic interest than Genoa alone could furnish?

Stead believed that, by widening the scope and availability of the proposed trip and by appointing a special committee to make the arrangements, the Toynbee Travellers' Club had used 'co-operative principles' successfully. He went on to argue – in an article which focused far more on Toynbee than on the Polytechnic – that a key benefit of such tours was the 'bond of union' between those who went on holiday together. The Polytechnic could not be as effective as Toynbee in this regard, as the numbers on Polytechnic tours were far larger.<sup>14</sup> Writing many years later, Thomas Okey of the Toynbee Travellers' Club claimed that it and some smaller tours run from Manchester were, unlike the Polytechnic tours, 'truly co-operative' because 'the whole personal service of organization, guidance, management, and preparatory lectures on art, history, literature, and social problems of the countries to be visited was honorary'.<sup>15</sup> The implication here is that payment for services rendered by the organisers – and, by implication, profit – was not compatible with a 'co-operative' venture in Okey's view. Nonetheless, the collective organisation of Polytechnic tours, and the resulting 'bond of union' (or, as Polytechnic writers might term it, good fellowship), could arguably be represented as 'co-operative'. We shall come back to the question of fellowship later in this section.

The other possible reason for annexing the 'co-operative' term for Polytechnic use was perhaps more pragmatic. The Polytechnic stated that over 150 institutions were in affiliation with its touring department.<sup>16</sup> These included other polytechnics and colleges, temperance leagues, YMCA branches and one or two organisations which called themselves 'co-operative', such as the National Co-

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<sup>14</sup> WT Stead, 'Co-Operative Travelling', 619-20, 629.

<sup>15</sup> Okey, *A Basketful of Memories*, 69-70.

<sup>16</sup> *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1897* [various front covers available via Thomas Cook Archives]

operative Festival Society. There was some collaboration with the Co-operative Holidays Association, whose 1900 brochure *Summer holidays by mountain, moor, loch and sea* advertised Polytechnic holidays in Paris, Switzerland, Italy and Norway.<sup>17</sup> Two years later, the CHA began to run its own tours abroad. By then, the Polytechnic had staked its claim to be the ‘pioneer’ of ‘co-operative’ holidays; if necessary, it could point to the affiliation of ‘co-operative’ organisations in support of this claim.

So what of the other half of the title of the earliest Polytechnic travel brochures: the ‘**educational**’ nature of the tours? Editorials about UK destinations and holiday homes rarely mentioned overt educational benefits or opportunities for education and professional development. A visit to the Clyde shipbuilding yards for engineers and an Easter trip to Scotland for architecture and engineering students (on which others could accompany them) were exceptions.<sup>18</sup> Holidays abroad, by contrast, were presented more frequently with an educational angle, whether it was a Reading Circle tour through Normandy or a Christmas visit to Rome.<sup>19</sup> In later years, students could visit Ireland, France or Germany during Easter, and boys and girls from the day school could (in separate parties) go to a holiday home in Dieppe to take ‘practical lessons in the French language’.<sup>20</sup> Older travellers could enhance their professional knowledge, the Polytechnic argued. A journey to Switzerland enabled visitors not only ‘to enjoy the bracing air of Swiss mountains [but also to] get a glimpse of continental modes of life and industry – a valuable education which cannot be attained by any other means’, or so the *Polytechnic Magazine* claimed.<sup>21</sup>

The educational value of the tours received little coverage in reunion reports. ‘WGL’, the author of several of these reports, made a cheekily subversive reference in 1900 to the groundbreaking trip to Switzerland twelve years before, praising a presentation by Mitchell as ‘not a geography lesson, but a most entertaining holiday yarn’.<sup>22</sup> In 1905, ‘WGL’ averred nonetheless that:

As a means of education, such a visit is unparalleled. The only text book required is a prospectus of the tours, and the acceptance of its

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<sup>17</sup> B/CHA/PUB/4 *Summer holidays by mountain, moor, loch and sea* 1900, 9-10. See also page 28.

<sup>18</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 29 May 1890, 341-2; 16 March 1898, 140.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 23 May 1894, 298; 10 October 1894, 180.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 15 February 1899, 79; 10 July 1901, 14.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 3 June 1896, 275; for similar sentiments, see also 23 March 1898, 150.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 19 December 1900, 289.

invitation secures an entrance to a valuable course of study in geography, history and economics.<sup>23</sup>

The same year, the Polytechnic Touring Association's brochure continued to trumpet its 'Co-operative' qualities, but the 'Educational' part of the umbrella term for the tours did not appear.<sup>24</sup> The 1908 brochure explained:

The Touring Department, though carried on independently of all financial liabilities to the Polytechnic, has each year been able to hand over a substantial sum to that work. The financial help thus given materially helps to maintain the great social side of the work of the institution. The Board of Education, the London County Council, and the City Parochial Foundation largely provide for the vast educational work, whilst the results of the Holiday Tours and private donations enables the Governors to keep this and the other invaluable sections of the "Poly" work in their present state of efficiency.<sup>25</sup>

If taken at face value, this would mean that the tours did not need to be directly educational themselves. Nor did they contribute directly to the support of educational work at the Polytechnic, but rather to a general state of 'efficiency' in which the educational and social work could prosper.

The promotion of the tours did not rely solely on 'co-operative' and 'educational' labels. The Polytechnic was keen to emphasise its '**rational**' and '**respectable**' credentials. The 'rational' element included a consistent espousal of social and behavioural norms in line with Polytechnic 'rules', as well as the benefits of a holiday as a healthy rest from everyday work. The 1895 brochure justified the arrangements on cruises, even at the cost of a considerable amount of revenue:

Two of the greatest drawbacks to the enjoyment of a yachting cruise were also removed – the drinking saloon and gambling. These restrictions, although entailing a financial loss of £500 to £700 per annum, nevertheless ensured harmony and sociability on board.<sup>26</sup>

Such was the cost of ensuring respectable behaviour – or at least the appearance of respectability - on board a Polytechnic cruise. (Whether gambling took place, beneath the respectable veneer, was probably difficult to police effectively.) In the section dealing with the chalets at Lucerne, the brochure emphasised another middle-

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid, December 1905, 173.

<sup>24</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/1 *The Polytechnic Touring Association Holiday Tours 1905*, 1.

<sup>25</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/2 *Holiday Tours 1908*, unnumbered page.

<sup>26</sup> *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1895*, 12.

class virtue: the privacy available in the bathing house, the boat house and in the private grounds and the promenade by the lake front.<sup>27</sup> The UK holiday homes – almost all at or near the seaside – offered a seductive package of privacy, a healthy environment and sporting facilities ‘reserved solely for the use of our visitors’, as an article about Mount Edgcumbe at Ramsgate put it.<sup>28</sup> That town was ‘famous for its bracing air and good bathing, while excellent yachting and boating can also be enjoyed at reduced rates.’<sup>29</sup> Rest was part of the benefits, too, ‘for all work and no play is not good for anyone, and ample opportunities for work exist at the Poly’.<sup>30</sup> A few years later, the *Magazine* confirmed that a new holiday home at Scarborough was:

well furnished throughout and includes handsome drawing, dining, sitting and recreation rooms; a billiard room, a gymnasium, bath-rooms, whilst the bed-rooms are lofty, airy and comfortable. The house stands within its own grounds and has grass and asphalt tennis courts.

Perhaps most crucially, ‘[t]he whole arrangements [would] be under Poly control’, with a Poly married couple in residence and a Council sub-committee overseeing matters ‘to ensure the comfort of those visiting’.<sup>31</sup>

Different UK holiday homes were sometimes promoted for specific sections of the Polytechnic community: the aforementioned Ramsgate home was open to young men ‘and a few married couples’, whereas a Brighton home was advertised the following year ‘for young men’ and a Llandudno YMCA property was suitable for ladies, and Mrs Edwards’ Eastbourne establishment offered board and residence to ladies and gentlemen.<sup>32</sup> Segregation by gender or marital status, and the significance assigned to exclusive sporting facilities and designated rooms for activities such as reading, smoking or playing billiards, were redolent of what one historian has called the ‘sealed-in privacy of middle-class gentility’.<sup>33</sup>

There was the occasional hint that the Polytechnic wished itself and its holidaymakers to separate themselves from the ‘masses’, as travellers rather than tourists, or even as ‘anti-tourists’. The 26 June 1890 issue of the *Polytechnic*

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>28</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 28 June 1893, 452.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, 1 July 1896, 2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid*, 21 August 1901, 67.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, June 1904, 52.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 1 July 1896, 2-3; 6 October 1897, 138.

<sup>33</sup> Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, 193.

*Magazine*, which focused almost exclusively on holiday opportunities, acknowledged that ‘our numbers at the Poly, are so large that there will, unfortunately, be some unable to spare even so short a time as a week on end for holiday-making’. Such members could take a train to the suburbs for any number of walking tours, avoiding the dreaded ‘cockneys’:

Within eight to fifteen miles of London there are hundreds of nooks of “real country,” the existence of which is absolutely unknown to the average cockney, who, if he does go to some much-frequented rustic resort, strolls about for a few hours in an aimless, tiring way, without benefit to temper or pleasure to mind or body.<sup>34</sup>

‘Recreation’ in the sense of refreshing the individual was also cited as a reason for foreign travel. One unnamed report of an 1891 tour reunion made this explicit link: ‘In future... you will put not your penny but yourself into the slot, and, well, there you are, you will come back with your machinery wound up to go for twelve months, guaranteed.’<sup>35</sup>

Norway – one of the principal early destinations - was, in Polytechnic promotional prose, a symbol of escape from modern pressures. No doubt the following extract has a touch of self-satirising irony, but the sentiment is still clear:

The chief charm of a tour in Norway lies in... its almost absolute freedom from “the horrors of civilization” ... no picture-galleries to make one's neck ache; no museums to make the weary feet throb; no promenades; no bands playing in the gardens; no continuation of London or Brighton... no crowds... no loafers ... no mammoth hotels where you have to climb a dozen flights of stairs before you can reach your bed... no stuffy railways to whizz you past the best scenery. No wonder that Norway is becoming increasingly popular as a holiday resort for those whose ideal of a holiday - and are not the numbers of such increasing rapidly ? - is to get as "far from the madding crowd" as possible.<sup>36</sup>

An article from 1898 posited spending Christmas abroad as a modern response to the pressures – and advantages - of life: ‘the modern method with many of us is to rush

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<sup>34</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 26 June 1890, 417-8. See also pp.94-5.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 13 November 1891, 296.

<sup>36</sup> *The Polytechnic Holiday Guide, being an extra number of the Polytechnic Magazine, 1891 Season*, 2.

away as far as possible for a complete change after the Christmas trade pressure... taking a few days extra holiday gives the opportunity of a trip abroad.<sup>37</sup>

Perhaps surprisingly, while ‘rationality’ and respectability loomed large in the way the Polytechnic promoted its tours, another key characteristic of the institution – **religious belief** – did not. The main example of an explicit link being drawn between holidays and religiosity came from Hogg himself at a Norway reunion, describing the tours as ‘more than mere holiday jaunts, emphasising the power for good such travels may become—above all, the bringing the created into direct sympathy with the Creator.’<sup>38</sup> But the musical performances at the reunions were not usually a cue to introduce sacred music, with the performers generally rendering such numbers as ‘Green grow the rushes O!’, ‘The Yeoman’s Wedding’ and ‘The death of Nelson’.<sup>39</sup> In an institution where the minutes of the meetings of the governing body recorded the saying of prayers at the start of those meetings, and Christian ruminations filled the pages of the *Polytechnic Magazine* regularly, the relative absence of religious references in the promotion of the tours is notable.

However, perhaps the values which were most significant to Polytechnic holidaymakers in encouraging them to tour were those of **sociability and good fellowship**, allied to themes of record-breaking, pioneering and sporting prowess. In this context, we may consider sociability as the social interaction within the Polytechnic community: and, as we have seen, critics of the tours sometimes claimed they detracted from general Polytechnic ‘sociability’.<sup>40</sup> A report of a Norway reunion praised the efforts of two of the tourists in producing a twice-weekly newspaper during the cruise, which the writer claimed gave them the ‘proud distinction of having published a paper further north than had previously been done’ – a feat for which the two members received gold medals at the reunion.<sup>41</sup> ‘WGL’ opened a report of a Swiss tours reunion by reminding readers that more people had gone on Polytechnic holidays that year than ever before.<sup>42</sup> Most reports were anonymous (although ‘WGL’’s initials appeared regularly), but the account of a combined Rhine and Holland reunion was attributed to ‘Pioneer’.<sup>43</sup> On the sporting

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<sup>37</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 7 December 1898, 230.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, 2 October 1891, 202.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 14 November 1894, 277; 18 October 1899, 194; 3 December 1902, 226.

<sup>40</sup> See pp.95-96.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 20 October 1892, 205.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, December 1903, 161; a claim reiterated in the December 1906 report of another Swiss reunion (183).

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, December 1908, 172.

front, the use of lantern views of the journeys as well as the destinations visited enabled audiences to recall their enjoyment of deck sports.<sup>44</sup> They also received a reminder that a Polytechnic bobsleigh team had won the annual race at Grindelwald in 1906.<sup>45</sup>

Above all, the tourists enjoyed meeting each other once again, making the reunions far more than an event at which they sat passively imbibing Polytechnic messages. For 'Auld Lang Syne', the audience 'shook hands all round till their arms ached in sympathy with their sorely-trying sides'. Another report reflected that 'the invariable success of these reunions shows how heartily our friends enjoy such opportunities of meeting again to ramble over the holiday haunts and renew the acquaintances made in such pleasant circumstances in the summer.' The chalet arrangements at Lucerne enabled tourists to feel they were 'more like a great family'. Even smaller numbers than usual at a reunion could be viewed as an advantage, allowing 'a general sociability which could not obtain at so large a gathering as the Swiss'. Reports of reunions in 1910 and 1911 barely referred to the supposed moral and educational benefits of the tours. Instead they praised the opportunities to enjoy 'the speech of a trusty friend, the singing of a good song, and the recital of a happy yarn' and claimed that the 'secret reason for the success of the tours arranged by the Polytechnic [were the i]nexhaustible... resources of the country [Switzerland] to give pleasure, and with pleasure health.'<sup>46</sup>

The emphasis on sociability and fellowship implies a certain introspective quality to the Polytechnic's notions of what its tours should represent and the benefits they would bring to holidaymakers. A rare example of linking Polytechnic tours to **wider political perspectives** came in 1909, with an article implying that there could be a German version of the *entente cordiale* formed recently with France and Russia: 'The Polytechnic have certainly always done their best to bring about a better understanding between the two nations. Last year over 1,000 Britishers visited Germany under the auspices of the Poly Touring Association...'<sup>47</sup> But neither the *Polytechnic Magazine* nor the promotional brochures tended to spend much time telling readers that they would enjoy meeting non-British people, nor that their holidays would enhance international understanding.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, 12 December 1900, 276; December 1904, 163.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, December 1907, 165.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 14 November 1894, 277; 30 November 1898, 219; 29 November 1899, 275; 3 December 1902, 226; December 1910, 142; December 1911, 146.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, March 1909, 3.

Clearly, then, 'co-operative' and 'educational' were by no means the only values which the Polytechnic espoused in promoting its tours. Different sources reveal a complex interplay of these elements along with various others including rationality, respectability, sociability and good fellowship. This reflected the amalgam of potential motivations for going on the tours or staying at Polytechnic holiday homes.

A good example of this was the range of comments, quoted in the 1895 brochure, from those who had been on cruises the previous year. While one or two praised the temperance arrangements, or praised God 'for His goodness to us all throughout our voyage', the testimonials also referred to the 'chumminess' of the cruises and the friendships which the writers had made. The holidays were 'cheap, interesting, instructive, and healthy' (a suggestive order of priorities) according to one customer. Another writer reflected that 'the enjoyment, the health, and the educating influence of the trip were so great that a longing desire was created for its repetition...'<sup>48</sup>

The point is further illustrated by two extended essays on Polytechnic tours, originally published elsewhere and included in the 1897 brochure. A 'moderately well-off' Mr Todrick had regaled readers of *The People's Journal* in Dundee with an account of his visit with his wife to the Lucerne chalets. The bulk of his article described the scenery he encountered, and gave examples of Todrick's self-confessed ignorance. However, he noted that 'Not a soul among them thought himself or herself better than his or her neighbour' and praised the organising abilities of Mrs Mitchell. Marianne Farningham's report of a Norway cruise for the *Christian World* endorsed the 'Christian and temperance principles' of the tour and noted the presence of the Bible and other religious works in the houses the tour party visited. However, the writer also offered 'special commendation' to the Polytechnic 'because it has brought down the expense of the trip until it is possible to people of small income... [it] caters for young people, but does not ignore the wishes and needs of older folk'.<sup>49</sup> It is not known whether the Polytechnic commissioned the original article and arranged for its placement, or whether it simply reported the article later.

The Polytechnic's promotional brochures echoed this recognition of a more sophisticated outlook on travel than a simple moral, improving perspective. The main editorial in the 1897 brochure stated that trips aimed to provide 'health,

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<sup>48</sup> *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1895*, 15.

<sup>49</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/30 *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1897*, 49-59, 65-7.



recreation, and a delightful experience of travel'.<sup>50</sup> The 1905 brochure text on cruises to Norway stated that the *Ceylon* was the only ship operating such cruises to ban intoxicating liquor on board; however, it also drew attention to facilities and services such as the ship's band and the dark room available for photographers.<sup>51</sup>

In other words, shared values were not enough alone to persuade members, students and others to take their holidays with the Polytechnic. It had to demonstrate not only its values, but value for money. In practical terms, this meant a sufficiently high level of facilities to ensure that the holiday homes and tours offered comfort (without excessive luxury) as well as homes from home for respectable behaviour and Polytechnic 'rules'. The Belle Viste Hotel in Madeira was 'surrounded by lovely scenery and ha[d] capital private grounds, admirable tennis courts, etc.'<sup>52</sup> Members going to Switzerland were warned not to expect luxury accommodation: 'Still, it, though plain, is respectable; and some of the Hotels where the parties will put up are really of a first-class description.'<sup>53</sup> For the Norwegian cruises:

Concerts and entertainments will be held every evening on board, and everything will be done to make the trip the most delightful ever organised. The fare will be plain, but good in quality, and plentiful in quantity. No intoxicating liquors and no gambling will be permitted on board, and the regulations of the Poly on land will be applied to the "Polytechnic" on the sea.<sup>54</sup>

No doubt such 'regulations' might be thought to be easier to enforce in the enclosed environment of a cruise ship. Articles about the cruises continued to remind readers about the excellence of its facilities, including several references to the use of electric lighting throughout the ships.<sup>55</sup>

### **Value for money: 'Specially low rates'? Destinations and prices**

Potential customers had one other way to measure value for money: the cost of the holiday. The Polytechnic promoted itself as opening up foreign travel to those who could not previously afford it, both in a general sense and with regard to specific destinations. 'Members, therefore, who are able to get the time and can spare the

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 18.

<sup>51</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/1 *Holiday Tours 1905*, 10.

<sup>52</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 5 June 1890, 360.

<sup>53</sup> *The Polytechnic Holiday Guide, being an extra number of the Polytechnic Magazine, 1891 Season*, 11.

<sup>54</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 6 March 1891, 146.

<sup>55</sup> For examples, see *ibid*, 24 April 1891, 255-6; 14 December 1892, 407.

cash, could scarcely get a cheaper, and certainly not a more delightful holiday' than the proposed sixteen day trip to Switzerland for £6 in 1890.<sup>56</sup> The 'specially low rates offered [were] due, simply and solely, to co-operation and Institute organization'.<sup>57</sup> Madeira, for example, 'has long been a favourite pleasure resort, though its enjoyment has hitherto been confined, for the most part, to those whose purses were "fat and long." We have, however, been able to change all that...'<sup>58</sup> Five years later, a promotional brochure emphasised that:

The committee were... the first to offer facilities for Continental Travel at such reduced rates to enable many of limited means to take a holiday abroad. These arrangements are now being imitated even by the Tourist Agencies who exerted strenuous efforts to prevent these concessions being obtained.

The Polytechnic had 'made the first attempt to bring... the Norwegian Fjords within the means of a large number of persons'.<sup>59</sup> Evidence that its claims for its touring operations enjoyed an element of wider credibility in some quarters came with a *Pall Mall Gazette* article which seemed to equate the holiday trips with the Polytechnic's overall direction and aims, namely 'the urgent need of healthy recreation for the working classes'. The article concluded that 'Intelligent progress on these lines... places the world and its wonders at the feet of those who have hitherto been content with the modest attractions of a Ramsgate or Brighton'.<sup>60</sup>

To test the Polytechnic's claims, we can examine the details of holidays – and particularly the prices of those holidays - offered by it and its competitors. The sources are the external promotional brochures and inhouse magazines and newsletters of the Polytechnic, the CHA, Toynbee Hall (both the Travellers' Club and the Workmen's Travelling Club) and Thomas Cook, with some additional material available for Dean & Dawson. Sometimes the relevant items are advance promotions of tours, and we should bear in mind that the promotion of a tour did not

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, 8 May 1890, 295. £6 (as at 1890 prices) equates approximately to £359.34 (2005). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.

<sup>57</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 26 June 1890, 405.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid, 413.

<sup>59</sup> *The Polytechnic Holiday Tours Programme 1895*, 1, 11. The 'Tourist Agencies' mentioned here may be a specific reference to Thomas Cook. John Cook, who had succeeded his father as Managing Director, complained during 1896 to the Department of Education that the Polytechnic was using external educational funding for its touring operations, and hence gaining an unfair advantage over Thomas Cook, who may have made representations earlier than this. Cook's complaint does not seem to be been effective (see UWA/PTA/1/2 and Strong, 'Class Trips', 102-3).

<sup>60</sup> Cited in the *Polytechnic Magazine*, 4 September 1890, 145-6.

guarantee that it would go ahead. Other items (for instance in the *Toynbee Record*) are tour reports, which indicate how much was actually spent per head of the touring group. Where no corresponding advance promotional material for those tours is extant, we may reasonably assume that the actual touring costs did not differ dramatically from the projected/promoted costs. This does not, and cannot, give a definitive complete picture of holidays offered to British consumers during this period. Comprehensive details of all holidays offered by the Polytechnic, the CHA, Toynbee and Dean & Dawson no longer exist. Also, there are few if any relevant materials for firms such as Henry Gaze and Frames, and – by contrast - Thomas Cook's touring operations were so vast by this time that they would need a separate thesis for a complete coverage. Clearly, in addition, holidays from two different agencies might not be identical in every small detail, even if their duration and price were the same. Nonetheless, this information can offer at least a partial overview of holidays offered by British firms in the late Victorian and Edwardian era.

We noted in chapter 3 that some of the early Polytechnic holidays on offer were available only to those with relatively deep purses and large amounts of free time. Nonetheless, it promoted many of its most popular destinations at relatively low prices. The attractions of a week at the Polytechnic chalets in Lucerne in 1895 – with substantial private facilities and two meals a day, three on Sundays – required only five guineas. First class accommodation in the nearby Villa Maria, and the excursions to the summits of Mount Pilatus or Rigi, to Fluelen or to central Lucerne itself, were optional extras. An extra week's stay at the chalets was available for an additional two guineas.<sup>61</sup> These basic prices – five guineas for a week and seven for a fortnight – remained the same at least as late as 1909.<sup>62</sup> There is no direct evidence to indicate whether such pricing stability arose from the Polytechnic's leadership responding to competition or to feedback from its markets – within the Polytechnic or outside – or whether it was simply a matter of decision-making inertia. Whatever the reason, others offered similar single-stop Swiss holidays at similar prices. Thomas Cook advertised a week in Lucerne for five guineas in 1902 and 1906, although a 'conducted' version in 1906 and 1908 required seven guineas.<sup>63</sup> The CHA's initial Swiss tour programme in 1902 was modest: one tour to Engelberg in

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<sup>61</sup> *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1895*, 16-18. For the sake of simplicity, the analysis which follows will refer to the holiday fees quoted to Polytechnic members; non-members paid slightly more, with the details varying from destination to destination.

<sup>62</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, May 1909 (Holiday Supplement), iv.

<sup>63</sup> *Thomas Cook Holiday Season 1902*, 4-5; *Holiday Tours 1906*, 2-5; "Popular" *Easter and Spring Tours 1908*, 14.

late July and early August, for £7 15s for a fortnight or £9 10s for three weeks.<sup>64</sup> It was a success, with 432 guests being accommodated and a similar number again in 1903.<sup>65</sup> By 1909, Switzerland was an established part of the CHA's overseas programme, with a two-week stay in Finhaut, departing on eight Fridays between May-September, advertised at eight guineas.<sup>66</sup> So 'specially low rates' in this case were available from the established market leader (Cook) and a new market entrant (the CHA), as well as from the Polytechnic.

This general picture of the Polytechnic moving into existing tourist destinations and publicising – and retaining - low prices holds for other elements of its portfolio, too. It could hardly claim to be the first travel agent in Norway, when its first cruise there in 1891 came a year after Thomas Cook's *Tours to Norway, Sweden, and Denmark* reached its sixteenth edition. But the price tag of eight guineas for a thirteen-day cruise was plainly attractive and had stayed relatively stable, at 9.5 guineas, eighteen years later.<sup>67</sup> This compared favourably with Dean & Dawson's version of the same cruise, quoted at 13 guineas.<sup>68</sup> The pricing of tours of the Belgian Ardennes was no doubt made easier by learning from the members of the Ramblers Group who spent 15 days there for £4 12s 6d. Official week-long Polytechnic tours of the Ardennes cost £3 per member in 1892 and 1893, rising to 3-3.5 guineas for the rest of the decade and even falling to 2.5 guineas in 1899 before rising to 4.5 guineas in 1904.<sup>69</sup> Although not a direct equivalent, the inaugural foreign tour of the Toynbee Workmen's Travelling Club was a four-day journey to Brussels in 1905 for £2 per head while, three years later, Thomas Cook offered a week in Belgium and the Ardennes for £5.<sup>70</sup> The cost of going on Polytechnic trips to Paris, while not remaining at the low rates of £2 10s in the seminal 1889 Exposition year, hovered between 3-3.5 guineas for various four- and five-day itineraries (often at Easter and Christmas) throughout the 1890s, eventually rising to 4.5 guineas in 1909. The CHA advertised a week-long Polytechnic Paris tour in 1900 at 5 guineas per head.<sup>71</sup>

<sup>64</sup> B/CHA/PUB/4 *Summer Holidays by Mountain, Moor, Loch and Sea 1902*, 5.

<sup>65</sup> Speake, *A pictorial history of CHA*, 30.

<sup>66</sup> B/CHA/PUB/4 *Summer Holidays by Mountain, Moor, Loch, City and Sea 1909*, 9, 11.

<sup>67</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 6 March 1891, 146; May 1909 (Holiday Supplement), iv.

<sup>68</sup> *Dean & Dawson Continental & Other Tours 1906*, 1.

<sup>69</sup> See, for example, *Polytechnic Magazine*, 12 June 1891, 363; 19 May 1892, 316-7; 19 April 1893, 308-9; 22 April 1896, 201; 28 June 1899, 327; June 1904, 51.

<sup>70</sup> Pimlott, *Toynbee Hall*, 160; Thomas Cook "Popular" *Easter & Spring Tours 1908*, 19.

<sup>71</sup> See, for example, *Polytechnic Magazine*, 17 March 1897, 128; 22 February 1899, 82-3; May 1909 (Holiday Supplement), iv; and B/CHA/PUB/4 *Summer Holidays by Mountain, Moor, Loch and Sea*

Cheap tours to selected northern and central European destinations were not the full extent of the Polytechnic's holiday portfolio. Like its competitors, the Polytechnic offered a share of two- and three-week holidays, often using Paris or Lucerne as a hub around which customers could choose from various options. More distant shores featured too, as in 1904 when Dean & Dawson promoted a Polytechnic month-long tour to the USA for 35 guineas, to coincide with the St Louis Exhibition – with an optional extra week in Canada for a further five guineas.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, the prominent promotion of tours such as Lucerne, the Norway cruises, the Ardennes and Paris - at low prices which remained low for over a decade – indicates that the Polytechnic was at least in the vanguard of providing affordable holidays, even if it is debatable whether it led the way.

### **Who were the Polytechnic tourists?**

The cost of a holiday, and the values of the travel organisation offering it, would clearly be important indicators of the sector of the market at which the organisation was aiming. This leads on to significant questions: who were the Polytechnic tourists and how far, if at all, can they be identified and classified?

Historians and contemporaries have attempted to answer these questions, at least to some extent, for other travel firms which were contemporary with the Polytechnic. Brendon comments that, by the 1860s, Thomas Cook's clientele included increasing numbers of clergy, physicians, bankers, civil engineers, merchants, booksellers, chemists, shopkeepers, lawyers, academics, scientists and architects – 'respectable' people with incomes often as high as £300-£600 per annum. It was a lucrative trade, with Cook's profits running at £20,000 a year by the late 1880s and averaging £86,000 per annum between 1900 and 1913.<sup>73</sup> If this broad depiction of the Cook customer base were true, it would create a plausible scenario where, as Cook focused its efforts less on the lower middle classes and the 'working man', other firms such as the Polytechnic sought to meet that unfulfilled demand. Robert Snape has commented that, despite its original intention 'to make possible working-class participation in holidays in the countryside by resolving the problem

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1900, 9. £2 (as at 1890 prices) equates approximately to £149.73 (2005), while five guineas (1890) equates approximately to £314.42 (2005). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.

<sup>72</sup> *World Travel Gazette*, May 1904. 35 guineas (1905) equates approximately to £2,107.61 (2005). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.

<sup>73</sup> Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, 85-6, 214-5, 245.

of lack of accommodation', CHA membership was mostly middle class, petit bourgeoisie and higher working class, with a shared cultural identity 'formed around values of respectability and taste rather than social class'.<sup>74</sup> Thomas Okey remembered that nearly all the 80+ tourists on the 1888 trip to Florence which inspired the creation of the Toynbee Travellers' Club were 'School Board teachers and the lower grades of civil servants'. Henrietta Barnett noted a similar predominance of teachers and civil servants, leavened with some members of the arts and professions and almost 20 'domestics', in a group of 153 on a tour four years later.<sup>75</sup> (Henry Lunn's establishment of the exclusivity of the Public Schools Alpine Sports Club was in notable contrast to these efforts.)

For the Polytechnic, the question is hard to answer. No systematic records of the names of tourists survive. There is occasional evidence of the Polytechnic running tours for large groups from outside its own community, such as 250 'mostly students and teachers' from Manchester who visited the Paris Exhibition in 1900.<sup>76</sup> One or two references in travel accounts are suggestive. Travelling to Lucerne a few months after the death of Quintin Hogg, his widow Alice noted:

Our second week was made specially interesting by the arrival of a large party of Yorkshire miners and colliers under the leadership of Mr. Hibbert. They had been inspired some years ago, by hearing this gentleman give some lantern lectures, with an earnest desire to visit Switzerland, and after saving part of their wages for four years, they had at last been able to carry out this wish.<sup>77</sup>

The assigning of 'special interest' to the presence of manual workers, and the effort needed to save up for over four years for a cheap overseas holiday, indicates that Polytechnic tours did not attract many from the lowest ends of the socio-economic spectrum. On the other hand, two years later and also in Lucerne, Wilfred Bryant wrote home to his father:

At meals I have on my right a Lancashire lad but he has a friend with him – but on my left is an elderly lady & her husband with whom I can talk interestingly at every meal. They hail from Dunstable. Opposite me are a lady & Gentleman from Natal – next to them an

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<sup>74</sup> Snape, 'The Co-operative Holidays Association', 145-151.

<sup>75</sup> Okey, *A Basketful of Memories*, 67; Browne, 'The Toynbee Travellers' Club', 16.

<sup>76</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 15 August 1900, 70.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, November 1903, 141.

uncultivated Swansea man & his wife. You would be surprised at the endless variety of station – age – education, wealth & experience.<sup>78</sup>

Bryant's letters also referred at various stages to a curate, a City worker and an architect, all members of the tour party. However, the observations of Alice Hogg and Bryant are anecdotal.

In order to gain a more substantive impression of the types of people who went on Polytechnic tours, an analysis follows of two types of source: membership and candidate records; and lists of holidaymakers.

In the case of **membership records**, the *Polytechnic Magazine* carried updates from time to time on the overall profile of its membership and the Polytechnic's management was sometimes obliged to divulge such information to external funding or regulatory bodies. In addition, the entries in the registers of candidates for the YMCI and YWCI gave the candidates' occupations. Of course, candidature did not guarantee membership nor, if the candidate became a member, did it guarantee long membership; and there is no direct link between membership and going on Polytechnic holidays. Also, it is not clear whether the occupational categories are self-described. Nonetheless, as the Polytechnic's members were its most obvious and captive target market for the tours, the candidate information is useful, particularly in ascertaining whether there may have been a change in the overall membership profile over a period of years.

For the purpose of this research, a random sample of one page of candidates per month was taken from the registers of candidates for the YMCI and for the YWCI.<sup>79</sup> The data sample for men covered 5,079 candidates, with over 170 different occupations, within the period 1891-1911. As the earliest surviving candidate book for women begins in late 1904, the data sample for women covered 1,055 candidates, with over 50 different occupations, within the period 1905-1911.

For the male candidates, one occupational category dominated the twenty-year period, and each individual year as well: that of clerk, which accounted for 2,137 candidates, or approximately 42% of the total. The addition of similar office-based occupations such as bookkeeper, cashier, civil servant, private secretary and accountant brings this up to 45%. The next largest category group may be broadly

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<sup>78</sup> UWA/PTA/BRY1 Wilfred Bryant, *Switzerland – My first visit May 20 – June 10 1905*, diary entry for 24 May 1905.

<sup>79</sup> UWA/RSP/P106A *Polytechnic Young Men's Christian Institute*; UWA/RSP/P107A *Polytechnic Young Woman's Christian Institute*.

labelled 'those in training' (student, apprentice, assistant) and accounted for just over 11%. Other significant category groups included fashion (e.g. tailor, draper) with 8%; construction (e.g. bricklayer, builder, carpenter, decorator, electrician, joiner, plumber) also with 8%; retail and sales (e.g. butcher, chemist, grocer, salesman) with 4%; unskilled manual workers (e.g. porter, warehouseman) with 3%; domestic service (e.g. butler, footman, valet, cook) with 2%; and printing (e.g. compositor, printer) with 2%. Occupations which we might classify as the 'lower professions', including architect, draughtsman, engineer, photographer, surveyor and teacher, only made up 6% of the total. Salesmen (1.5%) were the best-represented within the myriad sub-categories accounting for the remaining 11%.

The data sample, and the variety of occupations, was smaller for the female candidates. Nevertheless, similar patterns emerge. The largest individual occupational category was, as with the men, that of clerk, accounting for 22% of the total sample. Adding other office-based jobs such as bookkeeper, cashier, civil servant, secretary, stenographer, telegraphist, telephonist, shorthand typist and general typist brings this category group to 41%. The other significant category groups for female candidates included fashion (e.g. draper, dressmaker, embroideress, milliner, tailor) with 27%; retail and sales (e.g. florist, hairdresser, saleswoman, shop assistant, showroom staff, waitress) with 8%; 'those in training' (apprentice, assistant, student) with 6%; and domestic service (e.g. cook, governess, housekeeper, housemaid, ladies' maid) also with 6%. In a slight contrast with the figures for male candidates, the 'lower professions' (e.g. journalist, nurse, photographer, teacher) made up just under 9%, with miscellaneous sub-categories in the remaining 3%.

The occupational profile of candidates revealed in this data sampling seems to fit broadly with other statistical information about the Polytechnic's member and student numbers during this period. An article in the *Polytechnic Magazine* in mid-1890 reported that, of 8,700 'members... enrolled as members or candidates', 'Clerks and others' accounted for 2,054 of the total, with the next largest category Building Trades (1,754). A similar profile was reported a year later.<sup>80</sup> Samson Clark quoted a figure of 15,000 members and students in an 1896 letter to a potential advertiser.<sup>81</sup> Ethel Wood noted in 1904 that, while the Polytechnic claimed 14,397 students and

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<sup>80</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 1 May 1890, 279; 5 June 1891, 358.

<sup>81</sup> HAT ref. SAM 2-2 Letter to Jos Lucas & Co, 20 January 1896.



4,200 members, the majority of members were probably also students.<sup>82</sup> A year later, the clerk of governors told the Charity Commission that ‘the various classes of men who join the Institute [comprised] Clerks and kindred positions 35%, Mechanics 20%, Warehousemen, Drapers & Shop Assistants, Travellers, Porters, etc 40% [and] Others 5%’.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, it would appear that the Polytechnic community – candidates, members and students – broadly comprised the two main elements of the emerging lower middle classes: ‘the classic petty bourgeoisie of shopkeepers and small businessmen [and] the new white collar salaried occupations’.<sup>84</sup> As we saw in chapter 2, this was a substantial and growing market – an excellent target for the Polytechnic and PTA’s services.

However, if we accept that this was the Polytechnic’s main *de facto* target market for its holidays, the picture is less clear when we consider the question of income and, by implication, the affordability of Polytechnic holidays. On a national level, while real wages increased for most working people in the period up to World War I, regular cyclical downturns – with unemployment over 8% in 1878-9, 1885-7, 1893-5, 1904-5 and 1908-9 – hit some sectors harder than others, especially those where 52 weeks’ work in a year was not guaranteed.<sup>85</sup> There is substantial evidence of a check in the rise in real wages after 1900, due to rising import prices relative to export prices, falling productivity or a combination of the two.<sup>86</sup>

Even if we focus solely on clerks, the dominant theme of their working experience in this period was diversity. By 1909, when £160 per annum was the threshold above which income tax was payable, 46% of clerks in insurance, 44% of those in banking and 37% of those in central government earned more than this figure – but only 28% of those in local government, 23% of those in industry and commerce and a mere 10% of railway clerks did so.<sup>87</sup> Recent scholarship focusing on London clerks has argued for the existence of a two-tier system. Some clerks had specialised work and were well educated, from better social backgrounds, with good

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<sup>82</sup> Wood, *Quintin Hogg*, 228.

<sup>83</sup> UWA/RSP/3/4 Letter to AC Kay, Charity Commissioners, 5 February 1905.

<sup>84</sup> Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), 12.

<sup>85</sup> George R Boyer, ‘Living standards, 1860-1939’, in Roderick Floud and Paul Johnson (eds.), *The Cambridge Economic History of Modern History Volume II: Economic Maturity, 1860-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 280, 288.

<sup>86</sup> Charles Feinstein, ‘What Really Happened to Real Wages?: Trends in Wages, Prices, and Productivity in the United Kingdom, 1880-1913’, in *Economic History Review*, New Series, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Aug 1990), 351-3; Henry Phelps Brown and Sheila V Hopkins, *A perspective of wages and prices* (London: Methuen, 1981), 134-5.

<sup>87</sup> Crossick, *The Lower Middle Class*, 18.

promotion prospects; others, often youths or 'junior' clerks, did routine work. The introduction of pay scales meant that length of tenure was a key determinant of income. In the Civil Service in the years up to 1914, one category of clerks could earn between £70 and £300 per annum while another category earned between £55 and £150. Elsewhere, a 'first-class' clerk might earn up to £400 per annum.<sup>88</sup>

If the Polytechnic's members and students probably had diverse and fluctuating experiences in terms of employment, income and prospects, then its portfolio of holidays makes a degree of sense, both in the range of tours offered and in their pricing. The single word 'clerk' may well conceal exactly such diversity among membership candidates (and, by extension, members). Sufficient economic uncertainty existed in the lives of enough members and students for the Polytechnic to maintain relatively low prices on short tours to its most popular holiday destinations. On the other hand, the steadily rising security and prosperity of a proportion of those working in office-based jobs probably encouraged the provision of longer, more costly tours.

There are two surviving examples of the second source type, **holidaymaker lists**. The Polytechnic's 1897 brochure included the names and addresses of 90 'Honorary Referees [who] would be willing to reply to any communications from persons in their district who might desire independent testimony of the arrangements'.<sup>89</sup> The referees included eight councillors, three JPs and two Reverends. The list was overwhelmingly male, with only one Mrs and seven Misses included. Geographically, the best-represented region was the North-West of England with 24 referees including seven from Manchester, the best-represented town or city. Fourteen referees were based in the North-East and ten in the Midlands, with the balance spread between the South-East, the South-West, East Anglia, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Only two referees came from London, which perhaps reflects the role of those from outside the capital in spreading the Polytechnic word beyond its original base. The occupations of eight referees can be found in the 1891 and 1901 censuses: Ernest Cummins, a 19-year-old commercial clerk from Bristol; Henry Wilch, an insurance clerk, aged 20, from Norwich; John Callenso, a 22-year-old compositor from Penzance; J Dukes, a 40-year-old

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<sup>88</sup> Michael Heller, *London Clerical Workers, 1880-1914: development of the labour market* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2011), 27-9, 53-4. For comparison purposes with today's wages, £55 (1910) equates approximately to £3,138 (2005); £70 (1910) to £3,994 (2005); £300 (1910) to £17,118 (2005); and £400 (1910) to £22,824 (2005). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.

<sup>89</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/30 *Polytechnic Tours Programme 1897*, 3.

watchmaker and jeweller from Aylesbury; T Warburton, a 48-year-old cotton bleacher (described in brackets as ‘manager’) from Bolton; Alex Grace, a flour and grain merchant aged 63 from Bristol; Alex Gill, a 48-year-old builder from Didsbury; and T Butter, a clerk at a dye works, aged 50, from Perth.

Six years later, appended to a report in a *Polytechnic Magazine* holiday supplement of a cruise to Norway, departing from Grimsby, were the names and home towns of 166 individuals who had joined the trip. Ninety-four of the party were male (including six Reverends); of these, 49 were listed singly. Of the 72 women, 43 were titled Miss and 29 Mrs; 36 Misses and ten Mrs were listed as being unaccompanied by men. In geographical terms, 75 came from central London or its immediate suburbs, with a further 16 from the South-East (including three from the Isle of Wight). The bulk of the rest came from the North-West (24), the North-East (14), the Midlands (10), Scotland (8) and the South-West (6). It is impossible to know the proportion of the passengers who were Polytechnic members or students, although the report’s author claimed that most had travelled with the Polytechnic before, on the same boat (the *Ceylon*) to Norway or Russia.<sup>90</sup> However, we may safely assume that at least a reasonable proportion were members or students, given the inclusion of the passenger list at the end of the report (and, perhaps, the high proportion of passengers from London).

The 1897 and 1903 referee/passenger lists only represented a small fraction of the thousands who travelled with the Polytechnic in the 1890s and 1900s. Nonetheless, there are points of interest: the ‘respectable’ element as represented by the Reverends, the councillors and the JPs; the lower-middle class occupational profile of the few referees with traceable addresses; the predominantly male aspect of both groups, particularly the referees; and the high proportion of passengers on the Norway cruise who travelled from London and the South-East to the departure point in Grimsby. On this last point, it seems reasonably likely that a large proportion of the London / South-East passengers were Polytechnic members or students, lending the cruise a distinctive ‘Polytechnic on Sea’ feel.

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<sup>90</sup> *Polytechnic Holiday Supplement 1903*, bound with *Polytechnic Magazine*, Vol. 43, Mar 1903–Feb 1904, i, vi-vii.

### **Profitable: PTA contributions to Polytechnic finances, 1895-1911**

The previous chapter touched on the profitability of the early Polytechnic tours, their dependence upon the personal financial generosity of Hogg and the Polytechnic governors' decision in 1894 to separate the touring accounts from the Institute accounts. Ethel Wood concluded in later years that it was 'not possible to ascertain exactly what contribution the Tours were able to make to the finances of the Poly, as for many years the accounts were not separated from the general balance sheet'. She estimated a contribution by the emerging PTA of £50,000 or more to the Polytechnic finances between 1882 and 1914.<sup>91</sup> The PTA financial records extant to the present day are far from a complete record of that period. Nonetheless, an analysis of the accounts and relevant correspondence from the Polytechnic's accounts between 1895 and 1911, suggests that Wood's estimate is plausible and possibly even an underestimate. Furthermore, by examining those years for which detailed accounts are available, namely 1902-1911, we can both gain a more detailed picture of tourist numbers and discern some trends within the overall financial data: the general profitability of the land-bound tours of Europe and the UK, and the continuing pre-eminence of Switzerland; the much lesser contribution to profits (and sometimes the substantial losses) made by PTA cruises; and the regular losses incurred by the UK holiday home operations. Juxtaposing the profits from the PTA with the Polytechnic's regular financial losses as shown in the institution's accounts, both on its educational and social activities, emphasises the value of the holiday operations.

Switzerland remained the most popular place for a Poly holiday, accounting for more than half of all tour numbers in 1901 (5,290 out of 8,758) and 1904 (6,482 out of 11,394). The numbers going on cruises fell from 1,531 to 1,134 in the same period. Scotland attracted a consistent figure around the 1,300 mark each year; Paris accounted for over 1,000 a year by 1904; and the balance consisted of 'sundries' and a visit to the St Louis Exhibition in 1904.<sup>92</sup> The overall figures seem to accord broadly with those quoted for 1903 by Wood, who states further that 500 tourists visited the Rhine and another 500 the Italian Lakes, although she differs on the figure for Scotland (quoting 3,000).<sup>93</sup> An overall doubling in tour numbers from 5,314 in 1895 to 11,394 was certainly healthy.

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<sup>91</sup> Wood, *Robert Mitchell*, 37.

<sup>92</sup> Letters from Calder Marshall Son & Ibotson, Chartered Accountants: UWA/PTA/1/5/5, 24 April 1903; UWA/PTA/1/5/8, 8 March 1904; UWA/PTA/1/5/10, 2 March 1905.

<sup>93</sup> Wood, *Quintin Hogg*, 234-5.

The importance of Swiss trips in generating not only tourist numbers but profits becomes clearer with an examination of the relevant accounts.<sup>94</sup> While the records included details of special accounts for such items as religious services, concerts and animated photographs, three accounts are the key to understanding the year-to-year finances: continental and general tours; cruises; and the working account. The first two needed to generate surpluses with which to pay the general expenses logged in the working account and to leave an overall profit.

The **continental and general tours** account covered holidays to Europe, within the UK and elsewhere (such as St Louis in 1904 or Egypt and Canada in various years); the UK holiday homes; and tickets for special events such as the coronation of Edward VII in 1902 and ‘football final ties’ (presumably the FA Cup Finals at Crystal Palace) in 1906 and 1907. The Swiss tours were separated out from other continental European tours from 1907, after which the costs (and hence surpluses) are visible. Ireland and the Isle of Man were treated together till 1903 but separately thereafter. Most UK holiday homes were grouped together in most years, but Scarborough in 1906 and Ilfracombe in 1907 were treated discretely.

Between 1902 and 1911, costs in the continental and general account more than doubled, as did income, producing substantial surpluses, with profit margins (the surplus as a percentage of income) of between 12%-18%. While costs for Swiss tours are not available for the first half of this period, the surviving documents show that they accounted for over half of all ‘continental and general’ income – more than two-thirds in 1902 and 1903. For 1907-1911, cost figures for Swiss operations are extant, and they confirm that the greater part of the ‘continental and general’ surplus each year derived from the Swiss tours: over 75% in 1907 and 1908, almost the entire surplus in 1909 and 1910 and more than the account surplus in 1911. Tours of Paris and the Rhine were the most substantial contributors in terms of income after Switzerland. Of the other components of ‘continental and general tours’, which generated much less income, holidays in Scotland, Ireland and the Isle of Man saw

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<sup>94</sup> The analysis which follows is drawn primarily from the following: UWA/PTA/1/5/1 *Polytechnic Holiday Tours Trip Summary 1895*; UWA/PTA/1/5/2 *Polytechnic Holiday Tours Balance Sheet 1896*; UWA/PTA/1/5/3 *Polytechnic Holiday Tours Balance sheet and Accounts 1902*; UWA/PTA/1/5/6 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1903*; UWA/PTA/1/5/9 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1904*; UWA/PTA/1/5/15 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1905*; UWA/PTA/1/5/19 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1906*; UWA/PTA/1/5/23 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1907*; UWA/PTA/1/5/28 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1908*; UWA/PTA/1/5/33 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1909*; UWA/PTA/1/5/37 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1910*; UWA/PTA/1/5/43 *Polytechnic Touring Association Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1911*.

consistent but small surpluses; tours of Sweden generally broke even. The UK holiday homes created less than £1,000 per annum and either broke even or made a small loss. For holiday homes, this was perhaps unsurprising as there was arguably less potential for adding distinctively Polytechnic/PTA value; and also (as described in chapter 3) less potential for profit, as their cheapness served to deflect or defuse internal Polytechnic criticism of the relative expense of other holidays.

**Table 1: The significance of Swiss tours in the Continental and general tours account (£), 1902-1911<sup>95</sup>**

	C&G			Swiss			Swiss income as % of C&G income	Swiss surplus as % of C&G surplus
	Income	Expense	Surplus	Income	Expense	Surplus		
1902	72,956	62,589	10,367	50,906	n/a	n/a	70	n/a
1903	87,533	71,653	15,900	60,831	n/a	n/a	69	n/a
1904	99,623	83,721	15,902	58,593	n/a	n/a	59	n/a
1905	115,424	96,434	18,990	74,205	n/a	n/a	64	n/a
1906	142,186	122,667	19,519	84,291	n/a	n/a	59	n/a
1907	136,689	120,568	16,121	80,927	67,638	13,289	59	82
1908	136,021	117,833	18,188	74,658	60,641	14,017	55	77
1909	141,981	120,899	21,082	83,708	65,363	18,345	59	87
1910	155,181	135,281	19,900	85,361	66,854	18,507	55	93
1911	151,657	133,250	18,407	85,194	65,843	19,351	56	105

The **cruises account** tells a different story. It was originally described (in the 1902 accounts) as ‘Norway, Baltic and British Isles cruises’, in later years as ‘Norway and Baltic’, ‘Norway and British’ and, by 1905, as simply ‘Norway’. This part of the PTA raised far less income and the annual balances deteriorated from consistent small surpluses – never more than £2,000 - to substantial losses between 1908 and 1911. The majority of costs related to the *SY Ceylon*, with around £6,000 each year being allocated equally between wages and repairs, and later to the *SY Viking* which had been bought to replace the *Ceylon*.<sup>96</sup> By 1910, the Polytechnic’s accountants

<sup>95</sup> For context, £73,000 in 1900 equates approximately to £4,165,380 in 2005; £151,000 (1910) to £8,616,060 (2005); £10,000 (1910) to £570,600 (2005); and £23,000 (1910) to £1,312,380 (2005). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.

<sup>96</sup> UWA/PTA/1/5/28, folio 5.5; 1909, folio 5.5; 1910, folio 4.4; and 1911, folio 3.3.

were advising that ‘the Tours [could be] placed on a paying basis’ if cruising losses were eliminated – a possible hint of plans to change the PTA’s status.<sup>97</sup>

**Table 2: Cruises account (£), 1902-1911**

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expense</i>	<i>Surplus (loss)</i>
1902	23,003	21,013	1,990
1903	18,238	16,884	1,354
1904	15,927	16,147	(220)
1905	18,814	17,300	1,514
1906	18,779	18,175	604
1907	18,397	17,737	660
1908	32,405	40,833	(8,428)
1909	22,775	29,676	(6,901)
1910	23,065	29,437	(6,372)
1911	32,982	36,785	(3,803)

The substantial surpluses of the continental and general tours, and the smaller and less consistent surpluses – and then the losses - from cruises, fed into the **working account**. The expenses allocated to this account comprised various items such as postage, stationery, agents’ commission, insurance, furniture and ‘incidentals’. The costliest items were generally printing, advertising and salaries (the latter sometimes being combined with audit costs) which could typically account for a total of around £5,000 per year. The accounts do not reveal the names of those whose salaries were paid from this account. Therefore, it is not possible to be certain whether the salaries were the full costs of retaining dedicated staff who worked solely on PTA business; percentages of the salaries of Polytechnic staff (such as Mitchell and others) reflecting the proportion of their time spent on PTA business; or a combination of the two. Given the substantial amount of time that Mitchell and others clearly spent on organising, running and promoting the tours, it remains an open question whether the salary costs – which exceeded £2,000 in some years – were a true reflection of the time and effort devoted to the burgeoning holiday operations. Arguably, there was also an ‘opportunity cost’ to the Polytechnic, in that staff working on PTA business could not devote that time to the other educational or social sides of the institution.

<sup>97</sup> UWA/PTA/1/5/34 Letter from Calder Marshall Son & Ibotson to the PTA Committee, 23 March 1910. For a discussion of the PTA’s change of status in 1911, see chapter 6.

Mitchell acknowledged this point when offering to step down as Director of Education in 1899.<sup>98</sup> Once these general expenses were deducted from the income, a surplus remained in the working account. For 1895-1896 and 1901-1906 this was a consistently healthy figure. Part of the surplus then became a 'donation' to Polytechnic funds, which in most years amounted to £3,000.<sup>99</sup> The rest of the annual surplus was allocated in various manners, with the most frequent destination for funds being Lucerne, to help to pay off the mortgage on the chalets (on which £5,662 was spent in 1902) or for some other unspecified reasons, perhaps including substantial repairs or capital investment (£3,520 in 1904, £1,174 in 1905 and £6,070 in 1906). However, things did not go so well between 1907 and 1911, with a much smaller surplus in the first years followed by four consecutive deficits. The cause of the change of fortune from surpluses to deficits was plain: the deficits from cruise operations, as discussed above. The one exception was arguably 1910, when a 'Hotel Purchase' sub-account recorded the spending of £3,243 to buy a hotel in Fort William, Scotland, and a further £1,012 to buy a hotel in Killarney, Ireland.<sup>100</sup>

**Table 3: PTA profits and donations (£) to the Polytechnic, 1895-1911**

	<i>Income</i>	<i>Expense</i>	<i>Surplus (loss)</i>	<i>Donation</i>
1895	9,754	2,529	7,225	3,000
1896	23,926	16,005	7,921	4,500
1902	13,670	6,754	6,916	2,000
1903	17,629	7,264	10,365	3,000
1904	15,903	9,306	6,597	3,000
1905	20,962	9,389	11,573	3,000
1906	20,123	10,295	9,828	3,000
1907	16,781	12,152	4,629	3,000
1908	18,267	23,087	(4,820)	0
1909	21,262	21,507	(245)	0
1910	21,675	26,484	(4,809)	1,100
1911	20,789	21,317	(528)	3,000

<sup>98</sup> See page 89.

<sup>99</sup> £3,000 (1900 or 1910) equates approximately to £171,180 (2005). Source: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency), accessed 1 September 2013.

<sup>100</sup> UWA/PTA/1/5/34, folio 2.2; 1909, folio 3.3 and 4.4; 1910, folio 2.2 and 3.3; and 1911, folio 2.2.



Overall, despite the downturn between 1907 and 1911, the financial records which survive indicate that, despite growing financial problems with cruises, the PTA as a whole was operating efficiently and effectively (albeit not on the scale of Thomas Cook's estimated average profits of £86,000 per year between 1900 and 1913). It seems quite possible that the emerging PTA may well have generated £50,000 or more for the Polytechnic between 1882 and 1914, as Wood estimated. The resumption of donations in 1910 and 1911, despite continued losses, may be another indicator of the importance of the donations to the PTA's parent institution.

The financial health of the PTA made for a stark contrast with the financial (mis)fortunes of its parent organisation. No doubt partly due to the levels of capital investment being made in the Polytechnic, it continued to lose money. In the seven years leading up to the Charity Commissioners' £11,750 one-off capital grant in 1891 (and its promise of annual grants thereafter), the Polytechnic lost £76,467 – almost £11,000 a year on average. The detailed accounts for 1888 list sources of income as including institute subscriptions, examination candidate fees, use of the gymnasium and washing baths and refreshments. They were outweighed by the costs incurred from rent, rates, fuel, lectures, gas, the gymnasium, games, 'household requisites', 'incidentals', the library, newspapers, printing, Sunday teas, reception teas, stationery, washing and wages.

The Polytechnic accounts gradually became a little more sophisticated in the 1890s, with sub-accounts being set up for the educational department, the 'young men's social' department and the 'young women's social' department. Throughout the later 1890s and well into the first decade of the new century, these three sub-accounts registered regular annual deficits of well over £5,000 – sometimes close to £10,000 – with the educational department being the largest loss-maker of the three. Regular grants from the city parochial charities helped to offset this, as did donations from Hogg (for example, £4,000 in 1897 and £3,000 a year from 1898-1902) and others such as Studd. But Polytechnic finances remained in deficit year in, year out, throughout the 1900s.<sup>101</sup> The PTA was the only part of Polytechnic operations which made a regular profit.

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<sup>101</sup> For detailed accounts for the Polytechnic for the period 1891-1920, see UWA/RSP/3/1.

## Summary

By 1911, the Polytechnic Touring Association had travelled some distance from its modest origins. With the heart of its efforts at the Lucerne chalets, the PTA had developed a broadly profitable range of UK and foreign holidays to appeal to the diverse motivations of the growing lower middle-class market, while continuing to run holiday homes on what was effectively a non-profit basis. It might not have been a 'co-operative' pioneer or the provider of the cheapest holidays available as it claimed, but the PTA was arguably operating successfully in a business sense, with combined turnover from continental and general tours and cruises rising from around £96,000 to over £184,000 in the nine years up to 1911. Swiss tours were the key part of the portfolio, contributing more than half the PTA's tourist numbers and, at least after 1907 and possibly before that date, most of the profits. The values the tours projected, appealing as they did to Polytechnic members and students and similar people outside the Polytechnic, also found their reflection in Polytechnic/PTA tourists' representations of the places they visited, as we shall discuss in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5: Representations of abroad in travel

### accounts

#### Overview

All travel has its advantages. If the passenger visits better countries, he may learn to improve his own, and if fortune carries him to worse, he may learn to enjoy it.<sup>1</sup>

As the Polytechnic programme of holidays expanded, it generated a body of representations of the ‘Other’ – and, by implication and reflection, representations of the Polytechnic, Britain and the Empire – in travel accounts published in *Home Tidings* and its successor, the *Polytechnic Magazine*. This chapter examines those representations, using as comparative material travel accounts from the CHA’s inhouse magazine *Comradeship* and from Toynbee Hall’s inhouse magazine *The Toynbee Record*, as well as the logbooks which Toynbee Travellers’ Club members compiled of their tours. The time period for this analysis runs from 1887 to 1911: in other words, from the earliest days of the embryonic PTA (and Toynbee’s travel clubs) to the PTA’s change of status to a privately owned company. The writers’ accounts of what the parties saw and did, how they experienced the outward journey, their impact on local people and their restaging of Polytechnic ideologies of success and pioneering are all considered. To complement the official, mediated characteristics of *Home Tidings* and *Polytechnic Magazine* reports, private diaries and letters written by Polytechnic travellers, but not intended for publication, are also considered. An overview of the major diplomatic developments in this period is offered in order to contextualise some of the differences of tone and content between the travel accounts of the different organisations, as the publication date ranges and the precise subject matter (e.g. the balance of destinations covered) do not coincide exactly for them all. The CHA travel articles appeared after 1908, by which time a political context of British hostility to the French (in particular) had been overlaid with the signing of the Triple Entente. Nonetheless, the comparative material is sufficient for us to discern a distinctive ‘Polytechnic voice’.

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Johnson, quoted in Ronald Black (ed.), *To the Hebrides: Samuel Johnson’s ‘Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland’ and James Boswell’s ‘Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides’* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2007), 347.

Polytechnic tourists tended to concentrate – if we use Dr Johnson’s definition of the benefits of travel - on enjoying ‘worse’ countries, rather than returning home to improve their own. The overwhelmingly male profile of *Home Tidings* and *Polytechnic Magazine* contributors – both generally and in travel accounts – differentiated Polytechnic writings from those of the CHA and Toynbee Hall / Travellers’ Club. An examination of the travel accounts in *Home Tidings* and *Polytechnic Magazine* reveals that, in parallel with promotional activities, they represented the tours as an export of the Polytechnic’s institutional values, an amalgam of rationality, religion and respectability – although religious references, as with the promotion of the tours which we considered in the previous chapter, were relatively few and far between. The accounts of the tours also reflected the Polytechnic’s self-image as a pioneer and leading organisation, in the provision of the tours themselves and in what Polytechnic tourists were reported as doing while they were on holiday. These factors came together to produce a Polytechnic ideology of travel with elements of Orientalism, ornamentation and anti-conquest – particularly the landscaping and ‘sentimental’ strands of the latter - although none of these three theories provides a close fit with the Polytechnic/PTA. As the majority of Polytechnic tours at this time were to continental Europe, we may call the Polytechnic travel ideology ‘collective Continentalism’. Finally, Polytechnic travel accounts demonstrated a penchant for simple fun and enjoyment which set them apart from CHA and Toynbee accounts. When considered alongside the low priority apparently given to the spiritual benefits of travel, this may suggest that, while Polytechnic/PTA holidaymakers did not wish to seem less than respectable, they saw holidays as a chance to venture closer to respectability’s boundaries.

## Sources

The overall profile of the Polytechnic travel accounts we shall be considering is not identical to that of CHA and Toynbee accounts from the same period. The Polytechnic accounts – either travel essays or letters, or sometimes summaries by the Editor of reports sent to him – appeared in *Home Tidings* and the *Polytechnic Magazine* between 1887 and 1905. (Travel-related items and Polytechnic/PTA organised holidays virtually disappeared from the *Magazine* from that point until after World War I, perhaps in an attempt to demonstrate to external funding bodies that the Polytechnic’s inhouse activities maintained a focus on its educational core mission.) If we exclude letters from Sri Lanka from Hogg and letters from the

Middle East from his wife, there were 50 travel accounts published in this period. Ten accounts covered England, with three reports from Scotland and three from Ireland. In terms of foreign trips, the inhouse magazines published nine items apiece about Norway and France; five about Switzerland; three each about Belgium and Madeira; and one each from Italy, the Netherlands, Hungary and a trip around European capitals. There was also one account from a cleric of a 1904 trip to China, although this was almost certainly not on a Polytechnic-organised trip. The private diaries and letters considered here date from 1905-9 and 1911.

Toynbee Hall, by contrast, produced 32 travel accounts between 1888 and 1911. Four of these were the detailed logbooks kept by members of the Toynbee Travellers' Club 'expeditions', three of which were to Italy and one to Germany. The *Toynbee Record* included eight reports on Toynbee Travellers' Club journeys to Italy; five on France; two each on the Netherlands and Germany; and one each to Greece, Switzerland, Iceland and Spain. In addition, from 1904, Toynbee Hall ran a Workmen's Travelling Club in parallel with the existing Travellers' Club. The inhouse magazine featured five Workmen's Travelling Club visits to Belgium and two to France, as well as various briefer mentions of morning and day-long excursions in and around London. The CHA travel accounts in its magazine *Comradeship* between 1908 and the end of 1911 comprised a total of 21 travelogues. Ten covered England, including one report of a holiday arranged for the less fortunate by CHA free and assisted holiday schemes; four related to Germany; three to France; two to Switzerland; and there were two general travel essays.

### **Travel through a male lens: magazine contributors**

When it came to the contributors to *Home Tidings* and then the *Polytechnic Magazine*, and particularly those who wrote letters and articles about Polytechnic tours, the profile was overwhelmingly male. Many of the authors of the travel accounts were tutors who led the tours, such as Robert Avey Ward, director of the school of chemistry.<sup>2</sup> In other cases, the authors used pseudonyms such as BALLYHOOLEY, ONE WHO WENT or THE PASSENGER WHO ENJOYED THE TRIP MOST, or simply initials.<sup>3</sup> These anonymising devices lent a collective, institutional tone to their writings. Although it is impossible to be definitive, it seems likely that virtually all Polytechnic reports of foreign travel were the work of

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<sup>2</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 22 August 1889, 112-4.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 23 August 1888, 116; 29 May 1890, 343-4; 7 August 1891, 80-2; 9 January 1895, 27-8.

men. One unnamed author wrote about a ‘Young Women’s Branch’ stay at Ramsgate.<sup>4</sup> A lengthy letter about climbing Carrantuohill, the highest mountain in Ireland, was an exceptionally rare example of a detailed female-authored account, and this was included in the Sisters’ Institute sub-section of the magazine.<sup>5</sup> Women were certainly part of Polytechnic tours, but almost never reported them – with one significant exception, to which we shall return later. In addition Alice Hogg’s letters from personal travels to the Middle East were published in the Sisters’ Institute sub-section.<sup>6</sup> Given the Polytechnic’s origins as a young men’s institute, and the absence of female contributors from most sections of the magazine, the male bias of the travel accounts is not surprising. In contrast, female travel authors were a regular presence in the pages of the CHA’s inhouse magazine *Comradeship*, while a 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary publication for the Toynbee Travellers’ Club showed that over 50% of its members in that period were female, and that women had compiled or helped to compile 11 of the 15 tour logbooks then in the Club’s possession.<sup>7</sup> This difference in gender profile is interesting in an era where women’s travel writing might be processed and judged differently from that of men. It also puts Polytechnic travel accounts in what we might term the standard Saidian position of a male gaze, ready to ‘feminise’ the ‘Other’ – although the extent to which they did so is debatable.<sup>8</sup> As travel writing by female authors was by no means unusual at this time, it is arguable that the PTA accounts were the ‘odd man out’ in this respect.

### **Diplomatic and political context**

The period 1887-1911 witnessed significant changes in the international context in which the British Empire operated, with the British government attempting to maintain its military and diplomatic pre-eminence without engaging in major binding treaties with, or commitments to, other powers. However, as Richard Shannon has argued, William Gladstone and others might have wanted to set a moral example through a policy of non-intervention, but this was much harder to practise than to preach. The revolt of some Transvaal Afrikaners in South Africa and uprising by

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 11 September 1891, 167.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 5 June 1890, 361-2.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 4 April 1900, 168-9.

<sup>7</sup> A/TOY *Toynbee Travellers’ Club 1888-1913*, 3-15.

<sup>8</sup> For an influential discussion of women’s travel writing in this era, see Sara Mills (ed.), *Discourses of difference: an analysis of women’s travel writing and colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1993). Among other things, Mills argues that some women’s travel writing of this era used personal relations, self-revelation and other ‘feminine’ characteristics (51).

army officers in Egypt, during 1880-1, posed clear problems to British policymakers in terms of defending vital trade routes to India, Ceylon, Malaya, Burma, Australia and New Zealand. The British occupation of Egypt in 1882 created a direct disagreement with the French, with whom Britain had previously acted jointly in that region.<sup>9</sup> Britain's European rivals continued to attempt to expand their own empires. As the 'Great Game' continued in Asia, the shadow of Russian involvement fell over the second Afghan War of 1879-82, and Russian forces were rumoured by 1891 to be massing in the high Pamirs.<sup>10</sup> Germany under Bismarck endeavoured to acquire colonies round the world, notably in Africa, and to improve relations with France.<sup>11</sup> The French, meanwhile, had moved into Senegal and annexed Tunisia by 1881, and there were general scares about a possible French invasion of Britain in 1888 and 1900. Out of these years of manoeuvrings and diplomatic crises – not least the long drawn out Boer War – came a gradual British diplomatic movement closer to France and Russia, culminating in the Triple Entente after 1907.<sup>12</sup> Meanwhile, on the frontier between domestic and foreign policy, the Irish Question overshadowed the period. In the late 1880s and early 1890s in particular, it polarised British political party positions, with Conservatives and Liberal Unionists lining up to oppose the Home Rule plans of William Gladstone's Liberal Party, plans which gained support in the House of Commons from the Irish Nationalists.<sup>13</sup>

This external context was reflected in the Polytechnic, CHA and Toynbee travel accounts, with Polytechnic travel writing in the early part of the period in particular showing consistent hostility to the French – softening a little later on, and being offset by CHA enthusiasm for links with France after its diplomatic relations with Britain had become closer. This would not be the first time that British travel accounts had reflected a wider political and diplomatic context. Eighteenth-century Grand Tourists altered both their itineraries and the tone and content of their writing, according to their perceptions of the extent of a threat to British pre-eminence from France.<sup>14</sup> Before considering this further, however, it may be useful to look at what the various tour parties, particularly from the Polytechnic/PTA, did on holiday.

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<sup>9</sup> Richard Shannon, *The Crisis of Imperialism 1865-1915* (London: Paladin, 1986), 150-160.

<sup>10</sup> Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: on secret service in high Asia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 384-401, 464.

<sup>11</sup> Shannon, *The Crisis of Imperialism*, 147; 168.

<sup>12</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Realities Behind Diplomacy: Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980* (London: Fontana, 1985), 91-8, 113, 120-9.

<sup>13</sup> For useful overviews of the influence of the Home Rule question on British politics in the 1880s and 1890s, see Shannon, *The Crisis of Imperialism*, 226-248; Searle, *A New England?*, 149-171.

<sup>14</sup> Jeremy Black, *The British and the Grand Tour* (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1985), 162-5.

## **Landmarks, landscapes, learning: what Polytechnic/PTA, CHA and Toynbee tour groups did on holiday**

As might be expected, the overseas tours which the Polytechnic and embryonic PTA organised featured frequent visits to some of the major cities of western and central Europe. Paris loomed large, especially in the earliest years. The tourists took care to see the city's 'lions' (a common contemporary term for the major sights of a city), such as the Champs Elysees, Notre Dame and the Louvre.<sup>15</sup> In 1900, as in the groundbreaking trips of 1889, the party's main purpose was to visit a major Paris Exhibition, while the educational and professional aspect of tours surfaced in special excursions such as the inspection of a pen and pencil case works in Boulogne.<sup>16</sup> Brussels was a regular stop for Polytechnic parties on their way to Switzerland, where a visit to Waterloo was essential and among the city sights, as one account put it, 'The cathedral of a town must never be left out of our programme'.<sup>17</sup> That particular itinerary also included Amsterdam, Hanover and Berlin, while Christmas 1894 saw another Polytechnic party in Rome (via Turin), savouring the ancient sites and the picture galleries of the city, from where 'Some came home, a few went on to Florence, Venice or the Riviera; but the greater number went on to Naples'.<sup>18</sup> When parties stayed in the Polytechnic's principal centre, Lucerne, the famous Lion sculpture of that city would be an essential sight, as would nearby landmarks such as Schiller's monument and, at Altdorf, the statue of William Tell. The return journey included a stop in Strasburg to contemplate the military barracks.<sup>19</sup>

Given that contemporary transport technology still required many hours – in some cases days – to bring tourists to their destinations and to transfer them from stop to stop, even within Britain and western Europe, it is not surprising that tours often included a combination of scenery and cities. A journey through the Norwegian fjords might encompass a pause, for example, at Bergen for 'hunting up curios, inspecting the fish market, the Hanseatic Museum, a veritable relic of the Middle Ages, the museum, cathedral, and I know not what else', or a stroll in Stavanger's Paradise Park.<sup>20</sup> Baltic cruises visited cities and ports such as

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<sup>15</sup> *Home Tidings*, 16 April 1887, 131.

<sup>16</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 16 August 1899, 76; 22 August 1900, 85.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, 11 September 1895, 126.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, 9 January 1895, 28.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, 22 August 1889, 112-4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, 7 August 1891, 81; 19 July 1893, 493.



Gothenburg as counterpoints to time on board the ship.<sup>21</sup> An event-packed expedition to Scotland enabled the tourists to admire the Forth Bridge and Stirling Castle, to visit Glasgow and a nearby coal mine and to take various steamboat excursions along lochs – among other things.<sup>22</sup> While Ireland's main attraction for some might be trout fishing, walking, climbing or swimming, others enjoyed a visit to Dunloe Castle.<sup>23</sup> The Polytechnic holiday homes in England enabled its members, students and other tourists to escape the city life and enjoy an active outdoor break, with lawn croquet at Ramsgate, cricket and tennis at Weston-super-Mare or Eastbourne, sailing along the Solent or yachting around the Isle of Wight.<sup>24</sup>

At least ostensibly, the published travel accounts for the CHA and for Toynbee Hall during this period indicate that their organised holidays were more narrowly focused than those of the Polytechnic/PTA. Reflecting the CHA's origins as part of an anti-industrialising, anti-urbanising reaction, expressed through leisure, its tours tended not to visit major cities. Whitby featured twice in the travel accounts, once in winter – the writer visiting on the advice of his doctor - and once specifically at Christmas.<sup>25</sup> The German and French locations were generally rural, with only small towns or villages to visit. The one major exception was a journey to Frankfurt which TA Leonard himself led, with the specific aim of strengthening links with influential Germans and encouraging a programme of mutual exchange visits.<sup>26</sup> But the overall theme of the trips was, in the words of one article republished from *The Rambler*, 'a glorious outdoor existence' of walks, clean air and clear streams.<sup>27</sup>

In keeping with the Toynbee Travellers' Club's beginnings and explicitly educational purpose, the themes of its tours were academic and cultural – 'architectural studies' or 'interests chiefly historical and architectural', to give two examples.<sup>28</sup> The Polytechnic had visited Rome at Christmas; the Toynbee Travellers' Club was there at Easter to witness High Mass.<sup>29</sup> Toynbee travellers to Germany in 1903 visited beer halls and the opera, two destinations rarely on

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, 6 September 1899, 109.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid*, 21 August 1890, 114-6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, 22 May 1890, 326-7; 6 June 1890, 361-2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, 11 September 1891, 167; 22 August 1894, 104; 24 June 1896, 306; 30 August 1899, 101; 31 July 1901, 49.

<sup>25</sup> B/CHA/PUB/1 *Comradeship*, February 1909, 35-8; November 1910, 23-5.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, September 1909, 3-5.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, September 1910, 16.

<sup>28</sup> *Toynbee Record*, July-September 1897, 118; May 1901, 100.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, June 1906, 128-30.

Polytechnic tourists' lists.<sup>30</sup> Between 1904 and 1911, the *Toynbee Record* carried reports of the trips not only of the Toynbee Travellers' Club, but also of the Toynbee Workmen's Travelling Club. This newer club did not necessarily have a radically different agenda from its sibling in terms of destinations to visit, focusing mostly on France and Belgium. However, it placed special emphasis on making contacts and developing friendships with industrial and educational organisations sympathetic to the working class, such as the 'socialist workmen' in Brussels' *Maison de Peuple* and the *Universite Populaire* in Paris.<sup>31</sup>

As this analysis indicates, there were significant differences between the Polytechnic/PTA, CHA and Toynbee tours, at practical levels (where they went, what they did) and in relation to what were seen as the primary aims and priorities of the trips. It is to the articles and letters published in each organisation's inhouse magazine – as well as the logbooks of the Toynbee Travellers' Club – that we now turn. The source material is, of course, mediated – appearing as it did in official institutional publications. Nevertheless, it is possible to uncover an ideological narrative distinctive to the Polytechnic, which positions the Continental 'Other' and draws on strands of 'anti-conquest', as well as on 'ornamentalism'.

### **Getting there: the outward journey**

The earliest accounts of Polytechnic-organised tours shared with fellow members and students not only the writers' perceptions of their ultimate destinations, but also the experience of getting there. This was an indication that the Polytechnic construction of 'abroad' and the 'Other' would not be solely a quasi-'scientific', clinical, detached set of observations, but an amalgam of personal recollections and impressions, reflecting the views and values of the individual and the institution.

Comments on the outward journey tended to appear in the accounts of foreign trips and, sometimes, the longer journeys within the UK (to Scotland and Ireland). They might go into greater detail if they were part of an extended text – for example, a trip to Switzerland – and they could form the majority of the text if they were part of a report on a day-trip, to Boulogne for example. 'JRWK's' comments on the outward part of a Paris trip were reasonably typical, with their references to exact timings, seasickness (a frequent subject of observation), sightings of churches or cathedrals and 'respectable' concerns for comfort, cleanliness and personal

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<sup>30</sup> Toynbee Travellers' Club, *Expedition Germany 1903*.

<sup>31</sup> *Toynbee Record*, May 1905, 131-3; May 1906, 110-2.

appearances:

At five minutes to eight o'clock on the night of Thursday, the 7<sup>th</sup> April, we left Victoria Station for Newhaven, which we reached, I think, somewhere about 10.30. Very few berths were secured, owing to the great number of passengers sailing, so we made ourselves as comfortable as possible, and left the harbour about ten minutes to two o'clock. The moon was shining serenely, but it must be confessed the channel was decidedly choppy, as some knew to their sorrow. Dieppe was reached, if I remember rightly, about nine o'clock, and after some hasty refreshment at the buffet, we took train for Paris, catching a glimpse of Rouen cathedral on our way. We arrived at Paris exactly at 1.15, presenting, after the effects of travel and *mal de mer*, rather a seedy appearance, which speedily vanished after some ablutions.

Authors complained of being ordered to the lower decks on a trip to Ostend, and noted members of the party enjoying games and a concert on board ship while others suffered from sea-sickness.<sup>32</sup> They depicted the Polytechnic parties not merely as passive receptors of the experience of boat travel, but as tightly-knit groups who endeavoured to maintain normal activities and interactions – especially on longer journeys, such as this trip to Madeira:

We are all thoroughly enjoying ourselves (with the exception of those that are ill...) We find plenty to do, in reading, games at chess, dominoes, and other more frivolous games, and generally wind-up the evening with a concert. The officers say all the fun is our end of the ship, and we are going to have sports on Monday. They generally do not commence that sort of thing till they have left Madeira, but as we seem pretty jolly, fun is to commence Monday, when the band will play for the first time.<sup>33</sup>

If the party was at sea on a Sunday, then 'Divine Service' was a standard part of that day's events. Sunday services were a regular feature of the tours, and often concluded with a collection for the Polytechnic's philanthropic Holiday by Proxy Fund, which enabled poorer families to enjoy a break by the seaside. The outward journey was inevitably part of a bonding process, particularly on those occasions when the party occupied reserved compartments 'guarded against the intrusion of strangers'. However, Polytechnic travellers were not necessarily shy of demonstrating their talents to others on board. An outbreak of Polytechnic singing,

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<sup>32</sup> *Home Tidings*, 16 April 1887, 130; *Polytechnic Magazine*, 11 October 1888, 227; 14 August 1890, 98.

<sup>33</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 14 August 1890, 98.

on a boat waiting to depart for France, received ‘the plaudits of both the passengers and those on the quay’.<sup>34</sup> The overall impression of Polytechnic parties on board ship was one of tourists projecting their enjoyment and their views outward, while maintaining a protective bubble into which outsiders could not break. British insularity abroad was not necessarily new, but the Polytechnic tours gave it a distinctive new outlet. With the focus on the tour party itself and its actions, reactions and sensations, this is in effect a throwback to the Mungo Park ‘sentimental’ strand of anti-conquest travel writing.

The frequency and length of comments on outward journeys diminished, and all but disappeared, by the turn of the century, possibly due to readers’ familiarity with the subject by then, or because smoother voyages caused fewer incidents worthy of description. By 1901 an unnamed writer could pass over the sea trip from Southampton to St Malo simply by remarking that ‘Much to the satisfaction of all, Britannia ruled the waves’.<sup>35</sup> CHA travel accounts, beginning a few years later, scarcely mentioned outward journeys of this type at all. This may be due in part to the profile of CHA holidays reported in *Comradeship* (a large proportion within the UK); to the fact that CHA accounts were generally briefer than Polytechnic accounts; and to the different priorities of CHA writers and the organisation itself, to which we shall return below. These last two factors may also have contributed to the relative absence of descriptions of outward journeys in the *Toynbee Herald* – save the occasional contrasting remarks about railway journeys, either as pleasures ‘the delights of which custom cannot stale’ or as ordeals due to ‘the inexcusable negligence... of the railway company, in not providing the promised reserved accommodation’.<sup>36</sup> The logbooks, their day-by-day accounts and the inclusion of postcards, photos, admission tickets and other ephemera, gave Toynbee travellers the chance to consider the trips in more detail. But their coverage of the outward journeys tended to focus on the views from the carriage rather than what was going on inside: ‘It would take too long, says one member, to tell you of the games we played [e.g. whist] the tales we told, the impromptu picnics which replaced humdrum meals...’<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Ibid*, 7 August 1891, 80; 10 July 1891, 19; 11 September 1891, 163; 23 August 1888, 116.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid*, 21 August 1901, 69.

<sup>36</sup> *Toynbee Record*, June 1900, 121; June 1906, 128.

<sup>37</sup> A/TOY/12/2 Toynbee Travellers’ Club, *Siena, Perugia, Assisi Easter 1890*, 4.

### **Causing a sensation: the Polytechnic tourists as spectacle**

Singing on the deck of the boat, and recording the appreciative reaction of others, was just one example of a common trope in Polytechnic travel accounts. The Polytechnic tour parties would not simply let things happen to them; they would make them happen and report the impact.

A group's arrival in Brussels 'created some sensation marching from the station to the hotel'. A journey by car through Killarney caused 'excitement [which was] thoroughly enjoyed by us', while the subsequent exercise of tact and sensitivity in a visit to a Catholic chapel service 'gained for us the respectful tolerance of the whole congregation'. The people of Bergen in Norway explicitly recognised the Polytechnic and its work:

To our surprise every ship in the harbour seemed to run up a flag as a salute to our steamer, and immediately we got alongside the quay, Mr Halvorsen, the head of the famous Halvorsen line of steamers, and one of the most prominent citizens of Bergen, came on board, accompanied by Mrs Halvorsen. We then learnt that the people of Bergen, having heard that Mr Quintin Hogg's daughters were on board, wished to show the admiration for Mr Hogg, and the grand work he was doing at the Polytechnic, and adopted this graceful way of expressing themselves. Mrs Halvorsen promptly carried off Miss Elsie and Miss Ethel Hogg, and showed them all that time permitted of the objects of interest in Bergen.<sup>38</sup>

Recognition from the highest in the land clearly appealed to Polytechnic travel account writers, who also recorded a mutual salute with the Prince of Naples.<sup>39</sup> A few weeks earlier, Mitchell had managed to engage in a little one-upmanship at the expense of the German Emperor, when arriving in the Norwegian town of Odde for a trip to a local waterfall:

We arrived at Odde at about 10 o'clock. Here we had a most interesting and exciting incident. When about three miles from Odde I saw, in the distance, three large vessels coming up to us at full steam. We soon discovered it was the German Emperor's yacht, and two men-of-war accompanying him. I at once felt all hope was gone of our getting any conveyance for the Lotefos Waterfall, and for a time hardly knew what to do. However, I got the captain to send orders to the engineer to put on as much steam as possible, so as to arrive at Odde before the Imperial yacht was sighted. This was done,

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<sup>38</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 22 August 1889, 112; 22 May 1890, 326-7; 7 August 1891, 81.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 11 September 1891, 161.

and with the utmost despatch I got ashore; before the yacht had turned the point I had engaged every conveyance in the place, though I had to pay a good deal extra. I got the passengers down with as much speed as possible, and had about half of them accommodated when the Imperial boats hove in sight. Then there was a scene of excitement. The horses were wanted to be retained, but having engaged them of course I refused, as it was a case of then or never for our party. We all got off just as the *Hohenzollern* anchored and an order was sent on shore for twenty horses, but there was not a single one left. A courier was despatched after us by the hotel proprietor, but we had arrived at the falls before we were overtaken, and on our way home we met the German party doing the journey on foot, the Emperor having stayed on board. As we were leaving we steamed alongside the yacht, the whole party singing the “Watch on the Rhine”, and we fired off four guns as a salute. The Emperor came forward and saluted our party, whereupon, in the most innocent fashion everyone started singing “For He’s a Jolly Good Fellow.” The Emperor joined with the officers on board in laughing heartily at the sentiments of the song. Our own national anthem followed, and after the Imperial yacht had saluted us we steamed off.<sup>40</sup>

The interest and respect shown to foreign monarchs, and the spectacular reporting of such encounters, reflected an age in which the British monarchy became ‘an imperial crown of unprecedented reach, importance and grandeur’, and kings from all parts of the empire paid homage to the Queen-Empress.<sup>41</sup> Polytechnic parties’ respect for the monarchical institution outweighed any negative judgment of the foreign ‘Other’ and hence can be said to contain an element of Cannadine’s ‘ornamentalism’.

The emphasis on the locals’ excitement, and respect for Polytechnic travellers, contrasted markedly with similar moments of first contact in CHA and Toynbee accounts. On a Toynbee visit to Italy:

The population came in a body to stare, escorted [us] to the inn, manifested on the way a keen interest which was fully reciprocated, and finally came to the conclusion that the invaders belonged to the retinue of Buffalo Bill.<sup>42</sup>

R Thomson became the object of the curiosity of two retired German schoolmistresses as they tried to work out what the CHA was and what it did.<sup>43</sup> The theme of impact, of causing a sensation rather than simply passing through the land unobserved, took Polytechnic travel accounts beyond ‘anti-conquest’. In

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 14 August 1891, 94.

<sup>41</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 101-13.

<sup>42</sup> A/TOY/12/2, 18.

<sup>43</sup> B/CHA/PUB/1, *Comradeship*, December 1909, 37.

comparison, CHA and Toynbee reported encounters with local people at more plebeian levels.

### **Exporting the Polytechnic: travel accounts as success stories**

The travel accounts suggested, however, that a Polytechnic holiday was about more than simply getting noticed. Those who went on the tours were there to act out essential elements of the institution's values, and to bear witness to the extension abroad of the Polytechnic's self-image of pioneering, record breaking and success.

A major feature of foreign travel was to enable the visitor to assess the destination's situation and prospects relative to that of the homeland. In the case of Polytechnic foreign tours of this period, virtually every destination as reported in travel accounts became a site of evidence for Polytechnic superiority. The unnamed author of the report of the Polytechnic plumbers' 1889 visit to the Paris Exposition concluded that 'the best plumbing exhibited... was executed by a former student of our Polytechnic Plumbing Classes [which] gained the first prize for the plumbing at the Polytechnic Exhibition'. The reported testimony of local guides that the ladies in a Polytechnic party were the first to cross a specific glacier was 'another Poly 'Record''. A visit later in 1891 to another Norwegian location at 'half-past six, the earliest time at which tourists have ever arrived here' proved that 'in Norway as elsewhere, Polytechnic men are found beating the records'.<sup>44</sup> An unnamed female writer had mused ironically, a year earlier, on Polytechnic tourists' capacity for:

...overwhelming with questions any unfortunate guide who had indulged in vain dreams of trading upon the credulity of his hearers, or of slurring over his ignorance... Alas! tourists who follow us will perhaps never realise how much they are indebted to the Poly party for the minuteness and genuineness of the information they will in future receive.<sup>45</sup>

The implicit equation of the Polytechnic as an avatar for the Empire was occasionally made even more explicit; five men who co-signed a report on the acquisition of a new holiday home in Weston-super-Mare proclaimed that "'Westward the course of empire takes its way'". On the same holiday, the Polytechnic party supplied five

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<sup>44</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 18 July 1889, 34; 10 July 1891, 123; 11 September 1891, 161.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 21 August 1890, 115.

players to a local cricket match, with 'A BOROUGH POLYITE' reporting on the 'excellent' performances of the Poly men.<sup>46</sup>

The most significant measures of Polytechnic success, as celebrated in some travel accounts, were the tours themselves, as a reflection of the Polytechnic's own institutional narrative as an agent of change and a pioneer, bringing affordable travel to working people.

The Polytechnic is now known throughout the land as the Pioneer of Technical Education. I venture to prophesy that not least amongst her achievements will be held the fact that by such arrangements as these same holiday trips the every-day man and woman have had thrown open to them the widest possibilities of travel with all the unspeakable advantages accruing thereto. Hitherto we have visited the beauties of distant lands in our dreams alone - the barriers are down. Where next?<sup>47</sup>

"Meteor" echoed this sentiment six years later, arguing that the Polytechnic had achieved what governments could not:

Another barrier is down. The working-man need no longer discuss the probable advent of the millennium. It is here, and at a cheaper cost than if a Radical Government had been commissioned to buy the cheapest thing in ideal states. Our members and students could not have a better or cheaper holiday in which to recruit exhausted energies...<sup>48</sup>

The Polytechnic's self-stated position as pioneer and leader in the provision of affordable foreign travel was debatable; and the *Polytechnic Magazine* included, from time to time, notes of dissent from disgruntled members, as we have noted. However, such doubts did not cloud tour reports, whose innate sense of Polytechnic superiority has unmistakable imperial and Orientalist overtones.

We should probably make some allowance for the efforts of the various authors to entertain their readers, fellow members and students with attempts at self-deprecation, and not take the various demonstrations of the Polytechnic's superiority (and, by extension, that of London, England and the Empire) completely at face value. Nonetheless, such triumphalism was absent from reports of foreign tours in the CHA's *Comradeship*. JM Fitz-Clarke commented, perhaps naively, that in rural

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid, 15 August 1894, 89; 22 August 1894, 104.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, 28 August 1890, 133.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, 24 June 1896, 306.



Germany ‘there is no poverty, neither are there any rich’. An unnamed writer claimed that Continental people had more opportunities for holidays than the British, while Jane MJ Hindley drew attention to Breton women’s right to vote.<sup>49</sup> It is not difficult to see, in all these comments, the writers’ wishes for a better future Britain being projected onto a foreign canvas. The difference in approach between Polytechnic and CHA accounts was, in part, a temporal one; by the time *Comradeship* began to publish travel articles, the Boer War had shaken British confidence and Britain had signed the Triple Entente with France and Russia. The respective locations of the two organisations contributed to the divergence of tone, with the CHA based in Manchester and the Polytechnic in the imperial metropolis.

There were also significant differences from the Polytechnic tone in the Toynbee Travellers’ Club’s travel reports in the 1890s. The latter’s foreign tours were relatively infrequent in comparison with those of the Polytechnic – between one and three tours a year. The numbers going on the tours were relatively low, and only 423 members in all were admitted between 1888 and 1913.<sup>50</sup> However, the Club arguably had a more distinctive identity within Toynbee Hall than the embryonic PTA had within the Polytechnic, and hence there may have been less pressure for its reports to reflect institutional values quite so explicitly. The Toynbee Travellers’ Club accounts of their tours, both in the *Toynbee Record* and in logbooks, tended to keep the narrators’ presence at a distance from the scenes and events they described – no doubt in an attempt to maintain a suitably academic tone for an explicitly ‘educational’ club.<sup>51</sup> When a Toynbee party found itself on a boat to Messina in Sicily, the writer was at pains to mention it as just one group among many: ‘a medley crew... Sicilian gentlemen in riding boots, Piedmontese soldiers, nuns, Toynbee travellers, and peasantry with fruit’.<sup>52</sup> Toynbee travellers simply travelled: they did not (according to the accounts, anyway) sing to entertain others, let alone create ‘sensations’ among the local populace. On the other hand, while Toynbee (and CHA) accounts focused on the touring parties themselves, this gave more space for comments and reflections on the people and places which they were visiting – another divergence with Polytechnic accounts which we shall consider in the next section.

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<sup>49</sup> B/CHA/PUB/1 *Comradeship*, February 1908, 41; April 1908, 63; May 1908, 68-9.

<sup>50</sup> *Toynbee Travellers’ Club 1888-1913*, 3-14.

<sup>51</sup> *Toynbee Record*, October 1892, 8.

<sup>52</sup> Toynbee Hall, *Southern Italy* (1901).

## People, places, manners, customs: the Polytechnic and 'the Other'

Of Madeira and its wonders, what may we say? The scenery is beyond reproach, and let us hope the same is true of its inhabitants.<sup>53</sup>

This statement of indifference towards the local population was a telling indication of where the priorities of Polytechnic tour parties lay. CHA and Toynbee travellers, for different reasons, wrote at length about the manners, customs and qualities of the foreign people. Polytechnic travel accounts tended not to do so, although this attitude of indifference softened a little around the turn of the century. Nonetheless, by analysing some observations in various reports and letters, we can see the contours of a Polytechnic view of other nations.

The nationality which received the least favourable treatment from Polytechnic writers was the French. The wider diplomatic context mentioned earlier in this chapter undoubtedly found its reflection in aspects of the growing travel and tourism industry. Contemporary guidebooks to Paris took pains to include 'accounts of horrors' to remind readers of the events of 1848 and 1870.<sup>54</sup>

Given this background, Polytechnic travel account criticisms of the French were not surprising. One of the earliest Polytechnic travel accounts referred to 'an officious individual [at Versailles], who probably wanted a franc – which he didn't get.'<sup>55</sup> Dire warnings of the risk of being conned out of money by the French, particularly in Paris, became a commonplace of such reports, to the extent that they could also appear to be perpetuating national stereotypes or caricatures. The 1889 expeditions to Paris included matches for the Polytechnic's various sporting sections including its rowing and cricket clubs, facilitated (as noted in a previous chapter) by an expatriate Englishman, Mr St Claire.<sup>56</sup> France outside Paris was historicised as 'that country of beautiful monuments of bygone ages'; and Breton towns were throwbacks to the 13<sup>th</sup> century with 'no theatres, no music halls, no Poly Parliament, no hurry'.<sup>57</sup> Norwegians, on the other hand, received praise in Polytechnic promotional editorial as 'thrifty, frugal, and industrious, and... noticeable for their great Courtesy of manner... friendly, well-disposed and courteous... There is a total

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<sup>53</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 28 August 1890, 133.

<sup>54</sup> Alan Sillitoe, *Leading the blind: a century of guidebook travel 1815-1914* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1995), 29-30.

<sup>55</sup> *Home Tidings*, 16 April 1887, 130-1.

<sup>56</sup> See pp.59-60.

<sup>57</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 13 August 1902, 64; 21 August 1901, 69.

absence of desire to ‘fleece’ the stranger within the gate...’, while the Swiss were ‘friendly, hospitable and, all things considered, not exacting in their charges’.<sup>58</sup> As the years went on, Polytechnic travel narratives showed small signs of taking some interest in the indigenous people of the places they visited. ‘WGL’'s report of a Baltic cruise reflected that:

The peasants were good enough here to allow us to inspect some of their houses, and we were delighted at the cleanliness of the interiors. No great comfort or luxury were to be found, but the life of the people must be very hard, and, judging from the healthy condition of the children, it would appear that luxury is not necessary to ensure good health.<sup>59</sup>

Even the French received a kind word or two from the author of a report of a 1901 journey through Brittany. Everyone in Vannes had ‘a smile of welcome for strangers’, and the tourists ‘induced’ children in Carnac to pose with them for a photograph and sing Breton songs. Whether this was a sign of a slight thaw in the Polytechnic view of the French, or simply the fact of the tourists discovering that Paris was not France, is debatable.<sup>60</sup> A 1903 report of an encounter with Lapps even gave the latter a voice in the narrative, and mused that ‘if we amused ourselves at their expense they certainly enjoyed our visit and had a quiet laugh at us’.<sup>61</sup> Certainly the Polytechnic view of ‘the Other’ as shown in these travel accounts is a little too complex to be described in binary monolithic Orientalist terms.

However, Polytechnic comments on the characteristics of other nations’ peoples usually took second place to lengthy descriptions of what the tour parties saw. On visits to major cities, such accounts would inevitably include a ticking off of the significant historical and architectural landmarks, as in this summary of a breathless day in Bruges:

Train was caught at 6am for Bruges, and on arriving steps were taken to see as much as possible in the limited time allotted. The Cathedral of St Saviour was first visited; then Notre Dame, in which a splendid work of Michael Angelo was to be seen. There were also the tombs of Charles the Bold and his queen, to see which fifty cents each were demanded. Notwithstanding this heavy exaction the party saw the tombs, but were disgusted to find that neither Charles nor his consort

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 1891 *Holiday Guide*, 2; 13.

<sup>59</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 6 September 1899, 110.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 21 August 1901, 69.

<sup>61</sup> *Polytechnic Holiday Supplement 1903*, 10.

were buried there, the remains being deposited elsewhere. Then the celebrated belfry was visited, affording the greatest pleasure to the party during the trip. Only twenty-five cents were required to satisfy the *concierge*, and mounting some hundreds of steps the belfry was reached, which, however, did not satisfy the rising spirits of the party, and they climbed the rude ladder till the bells were beneath them. The position was certainly exalted, but not desirable, for the chimes commenced soon after, and they ‘knew what it was to be there.’ Bruges is an interesting city, but when you have two minutes to catch the train, and are some distance from it, the interest is transferred to the train.<sup>62</sup>

We can almost hear the members of the party calculating the cultural capital they could accumulate for the investment of their few cents. However, the air of rushing around to see as much as possible in a short time poses an interesting question as to whether this particular Polytechnic group were ‘travellers’ or ‘tourists’ (especially given the previously quoted examples of antipathy to ‘cockneys’). There is regrettably little or no evidence from extra-Polytechnic sources of how others perceived the Polytechnic tour parties, although one clergyman was moved to comment upon encountering a group in Meiringen, Switzerland, in 1892:

One evening there trudged into the hotel garden a part of unmistakable London lads, clerks and shopmen mainly, weary somewhat with the long walk from the Furka Pass. They were from the Regent Street Polytechnic, and when I found that a fortnight in Switzerland had cost under eight pounds, I first marvelled at what co-operation and contrivance and contracts could effect; then, turning my thoughts to grimy Woolwich, I began to wonder whether ‘Woolwich in the Alps’ was an impossibility.<sup>63</sup>

The ambivalence of the reverend’s perception of the group may, of course, tell the reader as much about him as about the group. But it does suggest at least a possibility that some more affluent and experienced holidaymakers may have adopted an attitude of superiority to Polytechnic groups, just as the latter did towards most foreigners.

The Polytechnic’s inhouse magazines regularly published detailed reports of the adventures of Polytechnic groups climbing and walking in Switzerland and Norway, such as this expedition to Norway’s Folgefond glacier:

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<sup>62</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 11 October 1888, 227.

<sup>63</sup> Rev. Canon John William Horsley, quoted in Ring, *How the English made the Alps*, 148.

The glacier party, consisting of nine, left at 4am, each member being provided with a horse and provisions. The horse enabled ten of the hardest miles to be accomplished with comparative ease, while the provisions gave strength to accomplish the remaining fifteen. The steamer left Gjerdi on the departure of the Folgefond party, and steamed to Noedheimsund, on the opposite side of the Hardanger Fjord. Disembarking at 6.30, we enjoyed a delightful walk of about a mile and a half to the Ofsthusfos Waterfall, the peculiarity of which is that you can walk under it without getting wet. The walk itself was through a country as unlike the massive grandeur of the fjord scenery as one could imagine; it was almost like walking through a beautiful valley of Kent with a background of mountains. Full justice was done to the breakfast, which was served as soon as we regained the ship. On through the Hardanger Fjord, until about noon we turned almost at right angles into the Sor Fjord, and enchanting indeed was the aspect. A slight haze lent softness to the scenery, the water of the deepest blue, the mountains rising to two or three thousand feet on either side, in every conceivable shape and form, with here and there a glimpse of the great glacier.<sup>64</sup>

In among the derring-do, the writer took care to domesticate the exotic – Norway as Kent – and to mention breakfast, one of the key indicators of touring ‘comfort’. While the ‘conquest’ aspect of such adventures is impossible to ignore, the descriptions of landscapes in which local people were far from prominent can also be categorised as a type of ‘anti-conquest’.

The contrasting tone of accounts from the Toynbee Travellers’ Club during this period is notable, given the ostensible similarities between its origins and aims and those of Polytechnic tours (a broadly middle-class clientele, educational motivations derived from origins within an educational organisation, a London-centric perspective). Accounts in the *Toynbee Record* reported on what the writer described as ‘several striking scenes [from] popular life’ such as the drawing of the municipal lottery in Bologna.<sup>65</sup> Two Toynbee travellers in the Netherlands praised ‘the courteous bearing, the almost aggressive cleanliness, and the wide-spread prosperity of the people’.<sup>66</sup> A report of a journey through Germany reflected that ‘Not the least value of travel is the correction of hasty and prejudicial judgments of foreign nations’ and found Germans ‘Courteous... and helpful to the stranger within their gates. Jovial, hearty, and sober withal their amusements...’<sup>67</sup> The much more detailed logbooks gave opportunities to describe the day-by-day excursions, to

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<sup>64</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 7 August 1891, 80.

<sup>65</sup> *Toynbee Record*, May 1893, 92-3.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, October 1893, 13.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, May 1896, 96.

include academic essays and lectures on the locations, to provide detailed breakdowns of the costs of the expedition and to assemble some impressions of the landscapes and the people visited. Three of the surviving logbooks all relate to visits to Italy, a country for which the Toynbee travellers displayed a clear sympathy. There were occasional touches of Orientalism, as in the depiction of small boys at Agrigento as ‘oriental’.<sup>68</sup> On the other hand, Sieneese people displayed ‘kindness and hospitality towards us... each and all will go out of their way to render any small service, in no servile spirit but with a dignified politeness’.<sup>69</sup> Italy was ‘the coming democracy of the Mediterranean’; industrial enterprise ‘has not been strangled as in England by an Act of Parliament framed to regulate and encourage it’; and the spread of education was ‘perhaps the most satisfactory feature’.<sup>70</sup> There was, of course, something patronising about this recognition of Italy’s progress along the lines of British liberal ideals; but few Polytechnic accounts gave any nations such credit. The unnamed author of the text for the logbook of the 1903 expedition to Germany devoted very little space to observations of German people. He opted to focus on historical, artistic and architectural subjects, comparing central Nuremberg to ‘a gigantic engraving by Albert Durer [sic]’, criticising the cathedral at Wurzburg for an unimpressive exterior and ‘incongruous’ interior decorations and noting that a Baedeker guide to Munich was ‘quite unequal to supply the thirst for knowledge expressed by some of the party’.<sup>71</sup>

The CHA’s internationalist outlook, meanwhile, set it aside from Polytechnic parties’ relative indifference towards the indigenous populations of the places they visited. TA Leonard described the purpose of a fortnight in Germany as being ‘the creation of friendly feelings between the two countries’. ‘FBS’ described similarities and differences between Germans and Britons, concluding that ‘the dividing things are in their nature superficial [whereas] The matters of union are fundamental’. CHA travel authors also recognised and welcomed Britain’s new diplomatic closeness with France. ‘MB’ emphasised ‘the language of clasped hands and voices raised in unison, the eternal free-masonry of youth, and joy!’ At the individual, sub-political level, writers witnessed local ceremonies in Le Conquet.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Toynbee Travellers’ Club, *Southern Italy* (1901).

<sup>69</sup> A/TOY/12/2, 31-2.

<sup>70</sup> Toynbee Travellers’ Club, *Florence, March and April 1888*, 137-41.

<sup>71</sup> Toynbee Travellers’ Club, *Expedition Germany 1903*.

<sup>72</sup> B/CHA/PUB/1 *Comradeship*, May 1908, 68-9; May 1909, 73-4; September 1909, 3; April 1910, 78; December 1911, 43.

Given the relatively low priority which Polytechnic tourists allotted to the idea of meeting foreigners on their travels outside the British Isles, it is unsurprising that their accounts of holidays within the British Isles showed a similar lack of interest in interacting with other Britons. This was even true of the Irish whom, Linda Colley has persuasively argued, the English, Scots and Welsh had viewed since the early nineteenth century as the most alien and ‘Otherly’ of the four intra-British nationalities.<sup>73</sup> To be sure, according to one Polytechnic author, ‘colleens’ might ‘blarney’ visitors into buying drinks or home-knitted socks; and their hopes of emigrating to America were admirable to an institution which regularly reported on opportunities for new lives outside Britain. However, the same writer urged readers to ‘Beware of falling into political discussions or arguments on religious subjects, with the natives.’<sup>74</sup> (Whether the writer felt that such matters were better debated in the Poly Parliament, or simply did not find them of interest himself, the absence of political engagement with the indigenous population is typical of most Polytechnic travel accounts.) One of the party hoping to climb Carrantuohill ‘spent the [final] day [of the trip] studying the people’ at Killarney’s weekly market and monthly pig-fair, but only after the serious business of climbing the mountain had been accomplished in order to ‘show that we are ripe for a Swiss trip.’<sup>75</sup> To one author, ‘much of our excitement [was] due to the striking contrast between the richness and variety of the scenery, and the wretched, open poverty of the people.’ Although visiting a Catholic chapel service satisfied curiosity about ‘how the ‘rale native’ kept Sunday, the ‘real working pleasure’ of a holiday in Killarney was the fishing, bathing, swimming, walking and climbing.<sup>76</sup> JW Minister struck a similar note when recalling a week in Scotland. The party arrived on Sunday and ‘noted how rigidly the Scotch ‘Sawbath’ is still kept up’, before going to church themselves (or attending a special service in the evening if they had not done so), before beginning the ‘real business of the holiday’ the following day; a programme of coach and steamer trips to enjoy loch views and mountain air before planting the Poly flag, taking a group photograph and sending it to the *Daily Graphic*. The same tour included a formal opportunity for professional education: a tour of Lord Rosslyn’s coal mine.<sup>77</sup> Reports the following week of 200 Polytechnic trippers who ‘invaded’ Scotland echoed some

<sup>73</sup> Linda Colley, ‘British and Otherness: An Argument’, in *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 31 (October 1992), 314.

<sup>74</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 29 May 1890, 343-4.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid*, 5 June 1890, 361.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid*, 22 May 1890, 326-7.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, 21 August 1890, 114-5.

of these themes. Their Edinburgh and Highlands programme included a visit to the Wallace Monument and a chance to admire ‘a collection of busts of Scotland’s greatest men’ – who, perhaps frustratingly for the readers, remained unnamed.<sup>78</sup>

The Polytechnic holiday homes in England, whether at Ramsgate, Weston-super-Mare or Eastbourne, offered a slightly less hectic option, but retained their alluring seclusion, exempting the tourists from much contact with locals (unless, perhaps, they took part in a game of cricket). Charles Fells Latham celebrated the library at Milntown House on the Isle of Man with its Manx bog oak, ‘Just the place for Poly boys to write their love letters’ and the fine drawing-room. In addition, ‘Oak, ash, elm, and fir jealously unite to guard our paradise on every side. Shady walks, pretty seats, lovely flowers, tennis lawn, shrubberies, and a stone-walled kitchen garden complete our Eden.’ From this secure private base, the party would find the ‘historic treasures’ which abounded locally, and enjoy ‘the beauty of hill and dale, wood and fell, gorge and torrent’.<sup>79</sup> The term ‘treasures’ suggests, in anti-conquest terms, appropriation. Polytechnic tourists enjoyed their sport and excursions to local sights in the daytime, and spent the evening singing songs in the drawing room, with the song titles and the names of the singers faithfully recorded.<sup>80</sup>

Toynbee Hall’s two travelling clubs focused most of their efforts on holidays outside the UK, although the Workmen’s Travelling Club paid visits to London attractions such as the British Museum and Temple Church.<sup>81</sup> CHA accounts of UK holidays – which in effect meant holidays in England – echoed some aspects of Polytechnic accounts, as they emphasised the company of fellow holidaymakers but not local people. At Whitby, Percy Redfern appreciated the availability of good company which he was not obliged to share, and spent time by the seaside with ‘no human creature... in sight.’ (Whether he expected to encounter the vampiric creations of Bram Stoker is not recorded.)<sup>82</sup> JE Henderson found that ‘given time even Lancashire people are lovable’, but enjoyed the solitude, as he and his companions could sing as loud as they wished without disturbing others.<sup>83</sup> Sometimes the limited company produced unexpected results: F Ackroyd arrived at

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 28 August 1890, 131-3.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, 26 July 1899, 46.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 15 August 1894, 89.

<sup>81</sup> *Toynbee Record*, May 1904, 124.

<sup>82</sup> B/CHA/PUB/1 *Comradeship*, February 1909, 36.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, September 1910, 16.



his first CHA holiday in Whitby a ‘solemn and serious bachelor’, and met the woman he would later marry.<sup>84</sup>

### **Jolly japes: the enjoyment of holidays**

The writer of an 1891 Scotland tour report identified a key characteristic of Polytechnic holidaymakers: a ‘capacity for enjoyment’.<sup>85</sup> Getting one up on the German Emperor was only one of many examples. Underneath the surface - the noting of sights seen in city or countryside, the reinforcement of the Polytechnic self-narrative as pioneers and record breakers and the often unflattering assessment of foreigners – lay the ever-present possibility for scrapes, japes and mischief. This manifested itself in a variety of ways, and could even start on the outward journey:

The deck of the steamer was very slippery indeed, and in spite of the smooth passage walking was barely possible, several on board unwillingly indulging in some graceful figure skating, chiefly in the horizontal position greatly contributing to the amusement of the lucky ones who managed to remain on end.<sup>86</sup>

Polytechnic tourists might experience the chaos of running to catch a boat back to England from Ostend; or an Ardennes holiday as a quasi-military expedition, where the party was subject to ‘inspection’, undertook ‘marches’, re-enacted the battle of Waterloo and ‘mutinied’ against a diet of veal cutlets; or enjoy the use of a whistle by a tour leader, and the resulting exasperation of a policeman in Berlin.<sup>87</sup> There was the case of ‘Mitchell v Cakebread and others’ – a mock trial during a Norway tour, in which the Polytechnic’s Director of Education acted as ‘plaintiff’ in a humorous debate against members of the party who had been less than punctual at various stages of the trip.<sup>88</sup> RA Ward and his schoolboy party paused from their walking and climbing for a little snowball fighting.<sup>89</sup> A Norwegian tour group enjoyed dressing up as Lapps.<sup>90</sup> Even the minor matter of securing half a pork pie on the train home from Boulogne, was a humorous Poly success story: ‘the Poly came in first as usual, as that half pork pie was captured by our team and borne in triumph to our railway

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, November 1910, 23-5.

<sup>85</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 28 August 1890, 133.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid*, 29 May 1890, 343.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, 11 October 1888, 227; 31 July 1891, 68; 11 September 1895, 126.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid*, 18 September 1891, 179.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 22 August 1889, 113.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid*, 19 July 1893, 493.

carriage'.<sup>91</sup> None of this necessarily represented 'disreputable' behaviour – and an inhouse magazine would be unlikely to record serious misdemeanours. However, at the core of the Polytechnic community were young men, arguably at a stage of their lives when they were most likely to test behavioural norms; and holiday locations, which can be seen as an example of the 'liminal' locations identified by Huggins and Mangan as being key to making disreputable behaviour possible.<sup>92</sup>

The sense of a collective Polytechnic presence within its own protective bubble, with its own relationships and in-jokes, is perhaps best illustrated by this extract from a tour of Scotland:

All shapes and sizes are we, and representing every class of character. The somnolent P, who awakens when the breakfast bell rings, and comes down just half an hour late, is almost a solitary specimen of his class...This morning he was punctual for the first time. The reason became apparent when a money-box made its appearance on the table, and Mrs. Deas announced her system of fines for miscreants. Already that box is getting heavy. N, lucky man, is enjoying sunshine (not from old Sol) all day and every day - except at meal times - no matter what the weather is. We sympathize with him: we were taken that way ourselves once. R is fond of flowers, but is also benevolent, for he no sooner gets a buttonhole than he makes for the pier and hunts around for a deserving recipient. He bars the male sex, however. Poor B is victimised by all. I don't know why. When that meek young man plaintively asks his neighbour to pass the bread-and-butter, there is a chorus of voices, 'bread-and-butter for Mr. B ,' and he is immediately surrounded with about a dozen plates full, quite upsetting his nerves. It is very rough on him. TP is improving his appetite. He is very genial and good-natured to all; good old Rambler. TR is still growing. He will soon be too big to get through the doorway; we shall have to haul him in through the window.<sup>93</sup>

By contrast CHA accounts, as mentioned previously, generally took a greater interest in the local populace. By reducing the focus on themselves and the tour parties, the writers lessened the scope for humorous self-deprecation – although JE Henderson recalled following the CHA's 'Hints on Dress' and wearing a coloured tie in an unsuccessful attempt 'to add to the cheerfulness of the party'.<sup>94</sup> The serious, overtly academic motivation of the Toynbee tours brought observation to the fore, with little space for more light-hearted asides – a rare exception being the teasing of one author

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<sup>91</sup> Ibid, 16 August 1899, 76.

<sup>92</sup> Huggins and Mangan (eds.), *Disreputable Pleasures*, xv-xvi.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 21 August 1890, 116.

<sup>94</sup> B/CHA/PUB/1 *Comradeship*, September 1910, 14.

for her purchase of a hat in Taormina, and her amusement at the satirical depiction of an English couple in a local stage play.<sup>95</sup> But neither CHA nor Toynbee accounts evinced the sheer joy of being on holiday, as Polytechnic reports so often did.

### **The purposes and benefits of holidays**

The members of the 25<sup>th</sup> Polytechnic Chicago party desire, on the eve of the conclusion of their excursion, to express to the Governing Body of the Institution their cordial appreciation of, and thanks for, the work of the promoters and organisers of the trips. The complete arrangements, the unfailing courtesy and ever ready assistance received from the various members of the Poly staff, both in England and America, have resulted for us in a holiday unique in itself, delightful in its social features, and educationally of the highest value.<sup>96</sup>

As we have seen, writers of Polytechnic travel accounts provided a wide array of examples of those aspects of the holidays which they found most useful or enjoyable: educational or professional development, ‘causing a sensation’ among the natives, comparing ‘Other’ behaviour in matters such as observance of the Sabbath, representing the Polytechnic, ticking off sights as they were seen, admiring sublime scenery – or simply being in good company, with a touch of ‘messaging about’ (to borrow Jerome K Jerome’s phrase) thrown in. Some writers went further, setting down in explicit terms what they believed to be the true purposes of holidays. While common themes emerged, there was no simple consensus on this subject. Reports of Polytechnic holidays reflected the material which promoted them, in presenting a variety of motivations for, and benefits from, travel. The occasional contributor to the magazine’s letters column even argued that the holidays which the Polytechnic organised were not what working men needed.

Reporting on an 1889 Switzerland tour, RA Ward – writing, we should remember, as a schoolteacher reflecting for the benefit of the schoolboys he had just led there - invested physical invigoration with religious and moral significance:

It is to be hoped that... we who have seen some of the wonders of Nature in their grandest forms, may have learnt more than ever to

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<sup>95</sup> Toynbee Travellers’ Club, *Southern Italy* (1901).

<sup>96</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, 30 August 1893, 576.

appreciate and reverence that Power Who has set them in their ordered places...<sup>97</sup>

In a letter about the success of the 1891 visit to Madeira, Kate Stevens noted that ‘What struck me most was the high moral turn pervading the party, and with what ease and naturalness the conversation often took a deeper turn.’<sup>98</sup> JA Brown praised the daily services held at Lewisham House in Weston-super-Mare for aiming ‘at guiding the young men by the best of all principles, and so enabling them to enjoy their pleasures in a rational, consistent, and Christian manner.’ He also pointed to the restorative aspects of a break from city life:

The wish arises that other seaside resorts might have similar Holiday Homes, managed by men imbued with sound views like Mr Deas. Cannot the Polytechnic extend this useful work? The young men arrive with unmistakable signs of the wear and tear occasioned by their various callings, often of a harassing nature, in the busy metropolis. They return home with bronzed faces, the very picture of good health, exhilarated by the invigorating ozone-laden breezes, which make Weston one of the healthiest towns in the kingdom.<sup>99</sup>

JA Brown’s comments complemented ‘Meteor’’s view, mentioned earlier, about holidays being useful to restore personal energy. On the other hand, one correspondent believed that Polytechnic holidays could be injurious to health. ‘TYPO’ went on a number of Polytechnic tours and ‘came home so ill that after being on the sick list a month, I had to go to Yarmouth and ‘bask in the sun’ to get set up, before I could resume work.’ The writer continued:

I have no sympathy with those people who go to the seaside “to see a little life.” To spend a large portion of one’s summer holiday hanging around the “niggers,” the itinerant ventriloquist, and the conjuror, and the evenings in a third-rate theatre or dancing-room, close and stuffy, to be followed by a few hours at card, retiring to rest in the small hours of the morning, is, to my mind, from a physical and intellectual point of view, to misuse a holiday. To lie fallow and let exhausted nature recoup itself is what the average worker in a great city needs, but comparatively few attain.

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<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 22 August 1889, 114.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, 11 September 1891, 164.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, 25 August 1897, 75.

He concluded that open air and rest were what working men ‘whose occupation confines them within four walls’ should seek while on holiday.<sup>100</sup>

Polytechnic travel writers rarely admitted that the tours had altered their world view, though a Mr Grieve told readers that:

Not only has the trip been a means of recreation to me, but also a source of profit in obtaining a greater knowledge of the world and of breaking down a deal of prejudice consequent upon residence in this sea-girt island of ours.<sup>101</sup>

By way of contrast, JH Freeman criticised fellow Polytechnic travellers for not upholding the institution’s values on holiday. In early 1890, when visits to Paris were still a novelty, he praised the arrangements for one such trip, while lamenting ‘the forsaking of our honoured and pestful [presumably ‘restful’] ways of spending the Sunday... and... the following of that pernicious proverb, ‘When in Rome do as Rome does.’’<sup>102</sup>

A number of CHA authors broached the same themes as Polytechnic authors on the fundamental purposes and benefits of holidays. They championed ‘rest and peace’ to ‘counteract the ever-increasing rush and hurry of everyday life’, rest which might be good for the health of ‘thin white girls and grey-faced lads’ from the cities; the benefits of solitude, but also the opportunities for good fellowship; and ‘the consciousness that we are ever beset before and behind, by the Love and Power revealed in Nature’.<sup>103</sup> As we have seen, the accounts of CHA tours laid more emphasis on contact with foreigners and, for some at least, this had a serious purpose of building good international relations. Reflecting on the arrival of some German guests to stay with CHA travellers in England, ‘FBS’ made this explicit:

In our holidays we try to learn from each other, to serve each other... the CHA and the individual members of it have been put into the position of being able to do something for international peace, not to talk, but to *do*.<sup>104</sup>

The authors of the Toynbee Travellers’ Club accounts occasionally touched upon similar sentiments, as we have seen, although the over-riding educational purpose of

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 22 August 1900, 89.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid*, 30 August 1893, 576.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 20 February 1890, 113.

<sup>103</sup> B/CHA/PUB/1 *Comradeship*, April 1908, 63; February 1909, 36-8; September 1910, 16; December 1911, 46.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid*, April 1910, 78.

the trips was so pervasive in their writing that it scarcely needed elaborating upon. A Toynbee visitor to the Netherlands praised the limited extent of such tours, particularly in the number of travellers, as preferable to ‘the mad rush of modern tourists, seemingly engaged in a follow-my-leader race from one huge town to another, to return at last wearied in soul and body, having exchanged one form of unrest for another.’<sup>105</sup> This was setting Toynbee travellers on the ‘traveller’ side of the traveller/tourist debate in a way which Polytechnic travel writers seldom did (except, on occasion, to burnish their self-styled pioneering credentials as the first people to visit certain locations). Accounts from Toynbee Workmen’s Travelling Club tours sometimes struck similar internationalist notes to CHA accounts. ‘TEH’, on returning from Brussels and time at ‘the great Co-operative bakehouses’, hoped that workers from different nations would visit each other more often for ‘the enlarged outlook on life... the increased knowledge of each other which such friendships beget... [with the result that] the desire for peace will be no empty sentiment’.<sup>106</sup>

### **The Continental turn: an exceptional account**

As previously mentioned, accounts of Polytechnic / PTA tours virtually disappeared from the inhouse magazine by the end of 1905. Within a few years the PTA had attained independent status. However, one travel account from late 1905, while containing many familiar Polytechnic motifs, gives a tantalising glimpse of how the travel articles might have evolved if they had continued to feature in the *Polytechnic Magazine* and if a change of status – and then war – had not intervened.

The article, entitled ‘British Pilgrims in Hungary’, recounted a journey through Austria and Germany and a sojourn in the Hungarian Tatra, concluding with a stay in the capital Budapest. Some familiar themes were aired. The trip, the first to Hungary, was a ‘pioneer tour’ for ‘pilgrims’. The writer thanked the efforts of the organisers and hosts in ensuring the comfort of the touring party. Excursions included visits to a Reformed and a Catholic Church, the former’s service being compared by the writer – in a domestication of the foreign – to the Gaelic service in Scotland. The tourists were a spectacle themselves, the object of local attention, being greeted with Hungarian song and (on a rafting expedition) pelted with flowers.

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<sup>105</sup> *Toynbee Record*, October 1893, 14.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, May 1905, 33.

The article also gave a sense of the Polytechnic's excellent connections, with hosts including a Baron and the Minister of Agriculture.

However, much else struck a very different note from the majority of Polytechnic travel accounts. Local people were present throughout: several named hosts and hostesses, the Slovaks of the Tatras who 'are said to be very poor and lazy' (a view contradicted by the writer's observation of 'some fine specimens of healthy manhood and women') or the Hungarian poet who 'has said that we cannot put our feelings into words, and this even in his own beautifully expressive language'. Trips to vineyards, wine cellars and a champagne factory might have sat oddly with the beliefs of the more orthodox Polytechnic adherents to temperance. The article concluded:

The trip to Hungary must long linger in our hearts as one of our pleasantest remembrances. May we make it thus for our Hungarian friends when they visit our shores!

Space forbids me writing more about the Hungarian people. One cannot sing their praises too strongly, of their unequalled hospitality and of their sweetly expressive language which lends itself so well to the romance of their nature and surroundings, of the quaintly artistic dresses of the peasantry so truly eastern, giving vivid colouring to the whole scene, and of the characteristic music which alternately makes one weep and sing. These and other traits of interest in the Hungarian life and character may be our theme at some future time. And now we would cry "God bless Hungary and her noble people and bring them safely through their present political crisis without a stain on their fair fame."

The romanticised, but entirely positive, view of the local people, and interest in their culture, was almost unique among Polytechnic tour accounts, as was the implication that the tourists would, some day, return the hospitality they had received. The author was credited as Sheena MacDonald – one of the very few instances in this period of a named female Polytechnic author.<sup>107</sup>

### **Beyond the mediated: unpublished Polytechnic travel memoirs**

For all the differences of content, tone and emphasis, the various Polytechnic travel accounts considered so far all appeared in an official inhouse publication. The amount of unpublished travel writing about Polytechnic tours which survives is small

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<sup>107</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, November 1905, 153.

in comparison. Nonetheless, a brief survey of the material indicates some suggestive similarities and contrasts with the published material.

The most substantial item is a collection of rewritten versions of letters home from Wilfred Bryant, relating his visits to Switzerland in May – June 1905 and July 1909, when he stayed in Lucerne and visited other cities such as Zurich.<sup>108</sup> The 1905 letters to his father and sister are of greater interest as the 1909 trip consisted largely of Bryant retracing his steps from 1905 (and, in 1909, he was accompanied by his father). These were prefaced with a short quotation under the heading ‘ADVICE FOR HOLIDAYS’, which suggests that the greatest value of a holiday is the memories on which the holidaymaker can draw ‘in the duller years ahead’. Bryant’s main practical aim for the holiday was to view the Alps – although he visited churches in and around Lucerne, saw the chapel devoted to William Tell and rode on the St Gotthard railway. Bryant’s letters comprise a revealing amalgam of inclusions, exclusions and attitudes – some reflecting the ‘official’ Polytechnic views, others challenging them. Neither the outward journey via Paris nor the holiday in Switzerland were the occasion for many comments about foreigners, though Bryant noted the inconvenience of a train delay in France and the subsequent examination of his luggage. On the other hand, on a boat returning from a mountain excursion, the laughter of Bryant and four female companions ‘amused the German & Swiss onlookers immensely’ – an observation which could have come from a number of *Polytechnic Magazine* accounts. Bryant had not travelled with the rest of the party from London, only falling in with them in Paris, and knew nobody else in the group. Although he spent time with individuals, including a vicar, and became friendly with several young ladies in the party, Bryant remained a little detached from some of the collective merrymaking – half-listening to an impromptu concert while writing a letter telling his father and sister how much he wished they could be there to share the experiences. Bryant’s reports of what he did on holiday – in between waiting for the weather to improve – consisted mostly of walks up mountains and through valleys, railway and steamer trips and visits to churches and chapels. He did not make extensive references to the Polytechnic, although he noted that they had secured a unique licence to hold open air services in Lucerne.<sup>109</sup> Bryant also noted that he was one of relatively few ‘churchgoers’ (i.e. devout) in the

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<sup>108</sup> UWA/PTA/BRY1 Diaries of Wilfred Bryant – NB some, but not all, pages are numbered. Page number references are given here where available.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid, entry for 22 May 1905, numbered page 3.



party, and professed admiration for Meggan's 'simple little Roman church with all its gaudy frippery yet telling of devotion we English folk seem to lack.'<sup>110</sup> Coming from a traveller who was apparently outside the Polytechnic bubble, this is a telling indication that spiritual concerns were not at the forefront of many Polytechnic holidaymakers' minds.

The other principal surviving 'unpublished' source from this period is a briefer account of a trip to Switzerland, probably undertaken in July 1911, by some friends (unnamed and unnumbered) of Isabella Plumb, a Scottish missionary. Like Bryant, they attended church on the Sunday after arriving: 'One could hardly think it was Sunday, as shops were open and everything going on as on an ordinary day.' The Plumb party, like Bryant, mixed steamer trips and railways journeys with walks and visits to local churches, including one 'containing a collection of human skulls'. They attended an organ recital in a Catholic church, with the organ 'said to be the finest in the world', before enjoying shopping for some 'very dainty' items.<sup>111</sup> Like Bryant, and like many accounts in *Home Tidings* and the *Polytechnic Magazine*, the local populace barely rated a mention. The Plumb party seems to have been happy in its own company, without any expression of a need to be part of the collective Polytechnic bubble. The Bryant and Plumb accounts represent interesting complements to the published Polytechnic travel writing of the period, without necessarily parroting their sentiments in every respect.

## Summary

Analysis of published Polytechnic travel writing and comparative material between 1887 and 1911 indicates that the articles and letters published in *Home Tidings* and the *Polytechnic Magazine* do not fit neatly or completely into the models and theories of Orientalism, 'anti-conquest' or 'ornamentalism'. However, they show aspects from each of the three, with the result being a complex, fascinating and nuanced picture of Polytechnic representations of 'abroad'. Whether recounting the experiences of bonding with each other on the outward journey, attending Sunday services on land and at sea, causing consternation among the natives, playing their favourite sports or portraying themselves as representatives of the Polytechnic,

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<sup>110</sup> Ibid, 21 May 1905.

<sup>111</sup> NLS ref. 12680, item 27 'Our Trip to Switzerland with the Polytechnic Touring Association' typescript account of a trip, probably undertaken in 1911, by some friends of Isabella Plumb, 1-3.

Britain and the Empire, the travel accounts created a vivid picture of a Polytechnic ‘bubble’ within which members, students and others could enjoy their holidays. Written and published at a time when the British Empire was at its zenith, albeit coming under increasingly intensive challenges from various quarters, these travel accounts did not allow much room for doubt: of the writer, of the Polytechnic or of the wider imperial context. They focused mainly on Britain and on continental Europe. Given their general air of superiority over the ‘Other’ and their emphasis on the experiences of the group, we can apply the label ‘collective Continentalism’.

While the specific purposes and benefits of holidays might be the subject of contention and debate, their overall purpose was akin to a cultural reset switch, reinforcing (attitudes and beliefs) and refreshing (body and mind): not about finding oneself, but reminding oneself of the important values. We should note as a caveat, however, that the inhouse magazine did not publish accounts of Polytechnic travels in the latter part of the period (1906-1911). Given Britain’s increasing diplomatic entanglements during those years, it is reasonable to wonder whether the confident tone might have softened if any such accounts had been published. The contrast with travel writing published by the CHA and Toynbee Hall between 1887 and 1911, with their references to aspects of life on the continent which might be equal or superior to life in Britain and with its underlying interest in, and desire for stronger links with, peoples across the Channel, is clear.

In that respect, and perhaps in one other, the CHA and Toynbee travel accounts may be seen as more radical for their time than the Polytechnic accounts. CHA and Toynbee Hall gave far greater space to female travel writing than the Polytechnic did. We should not necessarily view the Polytechnic’s as an ‘anti-female’ perspective, given that some of its pioneering early work related to opportunities for women and that women’s writing in the inhouse magazine tended to be restricted to the Sisters’ Institute sub-section anyway.

On the other hand, while the Polytechnic tours owed their creation to a large degree to ‘rational recreation’ and their presumed educational/improving benefits were promoted, like those of Toynbee Hall and the CHA, the travel accounts indicate that Polytechnic holidays were more than the sum of their origins. Polytechnic tourists might well attend church services abroad, for example, at sea – where they could presumably scarcely be avoided – or early in the holiday before getting down to the ‘real business’, which could involve visiting mines and factories, but would mostly consist of seeing sights and relaxing in good company. Some of the capers

reported in *Home Tidings* and the *Polytechnic Magazine* had a distinct whiff of slapstick and the music hall about them. This sense of fun, and the combination of privacy with public, collective enjoyment, gave Polytechnic tours a quality of liminality: on the margins between ‘travellers’ and ‘tourists’. CHA and Toynbee travellers might well have believed they, too, were having fun, but they did not write about it to anything like the same extent. We can acknowledge that definitions of fun and enjoyment did, and do, differ, while still recognising something distinctive about the Polytechnic accounts. Perhaps the Polytechnic parties’ overt ‘capacity for enjoyment’ was an early hint of the slow death of rational recreation and the rise of hedonistic, truly modern tourism. The relative lack of focus on the spiritual aspects and benefits of holidays indicated less concern than the Polytechnic’s leaders might have wished to see for at least one aspect of late Victorian and Edwardian respectability.

## Chapter 6: From independence to acquisition

### Overview

Previous chapters have analysed the emergence and growth of the PTA up to 1911: the social, educational and philanthropic aspects of its emergence with a new institution, Quintin Hogg's Polytechnic; the development of its portfolio of UK and foreign holidays, and the debates and occasional dissension this caused within the Polytechnic; and its overall profitability and appeal to a broadly lower middle-class market and its values and motivations, including 'co-operation', education, respectability, sociability and fellowship. Chapter 5 considered representations of 'abroad' – and, by implication and reflection, the Polytechnic and Britain – in travel accounts. It posited a Polytechnic / PTA ideology of 'collective Continentalism', as well as demonstrating a penchant for fun and enjoyment on the tours which may have edged towards the boundaries of respectability.

This chapter considers the PTA's history between its establishment as a private company in 1911 and its acquisition by an aviation entrepreneur in 1962. Due in part to its 1911 status change, the nature of the available evidence permits neither a comprehensive direct comparison with the pre-1911 era, nor a sustained analysis of the PTA's commercial operations such as might be attempted within a business history. As the PTA no longer operated wholly within the Polytechnic, financial records and minutes of key meetings are not available; and information on the business structure and key staff is sketchy. In addition, *Polytechnic Magazine* accounts of holidays from those who led or joined PTA tours virtually disappeared. Nonetheless, *Polytechnic Magazine* coverage, Polytechnic governing body minutes, information lodged at Companies House, promotional materials, press advertising, radio broadcast scripts, market research and other correspondence all help us to trace and understand the PTA's continuing development.

This chapter places the post-1911 PTA in a wider national and industrial context. Developments and challenges included the suspension and then resumption of activities in the wake of two world wars; changing patterns of leisure; the creation and extension of various forms of mass media and new modes of transport; and the growth of new travel firms and new types of holidays. Referring back to our principal questions about the PTA's distinctiveness, success and modernity, it focuses on certain key developments. Firstly, links with the Polytechnic remained, as shown among other things by the identities of the PTA's owners and its donations

to its parent institution. The company's increasing tendency to self-historicise and to promote its own longevity indirectly emphasised its Polytechnic origins. Secondly, a slow but discernible shift occurred in the balance of the PTA's portfolio of destinations – albeit with a continuing strong emphasis on Switzerland – and in its ideological underpinning of the reasons for, and benefits of, travel. Thirdly, the expansion of its touring programme and its staff, along with its involvement in key travel industry bodies and other evidence such as advertising spend, indicates that the PTA became a sizeable and respected industry player even as, in the 1950s, its pricing strategy and distinctiveness came under assault from new entrants to the industry. The firm adapted and survived, changing its name to Poly Travel and remaining sufficiently attractive as a company and as a brand to be acquired over fifty years after its beginnings as a private company and around 75 years after its earliest origins. However, some of the qualities which aided its longevity and distinctiveness may also lead us to doubt whether it was 'modern' during this period, in the sense of championing new methods or shaping the industry in which it operated.

## **National context**

### *1918-1939*

The titles of two accounts of the interwar period referred to the significance of leisure, while a third asserted that 'Things seemed the same but were not'.<sup>1</sup> We should not underestimate continuities. One assessment of the period included two chapters about 'Revolution averted'.<sup>2</sup> A recent study of interwar sport detected 'respect for tradition, formality and... the importance of observing accepted customs' from a people of 'a conservative frame of mind... largely at peace with themselves and each other'.<sup>3</sup>

Nonetheless, this was a period of significant changes on a national and local level. Britain's total population continued to rise, especially in London and the Home

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<sup>1</sup> Robert Graves and Alan Hodge, *The Long Weekend: A Social History of Great Britain 1918-1939* (London: Cardinal, 1991); Martin Pugh, *We danced all night: a social history of Britain between the wars* (London: Vintage, 2009); Charles Mowat, *Britain between the Wars 1918-1940* (London: Methuen & Co, 1987), 202.

<sup>2</sup> Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend*, 109.

<sup>3</sup> Mike Huggins and Jack Williams, *Sport and the English, 1918-1939* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 157-8.

Counties.<sup>4</sup> Despite dramatic spikes in unemployment levels in 1921-2 and 1931-5 in particular, many workers' wage rises consistently outstripped increases in the cost of living, with average earnings for professionals, managers, clerks and skilled manual workers almost doubling or more than doubling by the mid-1930s. For example, a male clerk's earnings rose from a weighted average of £99 per annum for 1911-3 to £192 by 1935, with the equivalent figures for female clerks being £45 and £99 respectively. Retail prices fell through most of the 1920s until 1933.<sup>5</sup> For many of the middle classes, this period might have seemed like 'a kind of golden age'.<sup>6</sup> In London, for instance, the economy was less affected than other areas of Britain by downturns, as relatively few worked in the declining industries of coal, shipping, cotton, wool, iron and steel.<sup>7</sup> The growth of public transport provision, particularly motor buses and the underground, and of private ownership of motor cars, fed into the growth of the capital's suburbs, in which many clerks and skilled workers could take advantage of low interest rates to buy their own houses for the first time.<sup>8</sup> Over two million cars were on British roads by 1939, with Surrey and Middlesex leading the adoption of a convenience which *Autocar* called 'indispensable' to modern life.<sup>9</sup>

Patterns of leisure continued to evolve, with overall consumption and expenditure expanding, whether provision came via the state, the voluntary sector, commercial leisure or in a 'self-made' context. This was aided by the relatively low cost of some forms of entertainment and by reductions in working hours, immediately after World War I and in subsequent legislation for certain industry sectors and categories of worker.<sup>10</sup> Localised agreements by employers to grant paid holiday in some industries before the war gradually changed into a pattern of national agreements after 1918 for engineering workers, railway shopmen, miners, iron and steel workers and potters. As the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress

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<sup>4</sup> Mowat, 225; Constance Rollatt and Julia Parker, 'Population and Family', in AH Halsey (ed.), *Trends in British Society since 1900: a guide to the changing social structure of Britain* (London: Macmillan, 1972), 31-7.

<sup>5</sup> Guy Routh, *Occupation and pay in Great Britain 1906-79* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980), 120-1; 134-5. See also CH Feinstein, *National income, expenditure and output of the United Kingdom 1855-1965* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 140.

<sup>6</sup> Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press 2000), 59.

<sup>7</sup> Inwood, *A history of London*, 724-7.

<sup>8</sup> White, *London in the 20th century*, 25, 33. Also see Pugh, *We danced all night*, 63-72.

<sup>9</sup> Michael John Law, 'The car indispensable': the hidden influence of the car in inter-war suburban London', in *Journal of Historical Geography* Vol. 38 (2012), 424-433.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh Cunningham, 'Leisure and Culture', in FML Thompson (ed.), *The Cambridge Social History of Britain 1750-1950 Volume 2: People and their environment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 320-339; Stephen G Jones, *Workers at play: a social and economic history of leisure 1918-1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 9-16.

pressed for further progress, other industries were the subject of further voluntary agreements, in anticipation of the Holidays with Pay Act in 1938.<sup>11</sup>

New and existing forms of mass media and communications extended their reach, with sales of national daily newspapers and radio licences, as well as cinema admissions, all rising steadily. Over 12,000 new books were published in 1924, almost double the figure for twenty years before.<sup>12</sup> The total value of national expenditure on advertising almost doubled between the wars, with increasing attention being paid to consumer motivations.<sup>13</sup> This ‘culture for democracy’ was a social and economic reflection of the changing political landscape, too, with legislation in 1918 which increased the eligible electorate to over 21 million people including over eight million women.<sup>14</sup>

However, the concerns of those who advocated ‘rational recreation’ had not disappeared, merely taken aim at new targets. ‘We have gone recreation-mad,’ claimed Sir Herbert Nield at a meeting of the Lord’s Day Observance Society in 1921. No doubt his concern was exacerbated by falling attendances at Church of England services, which only just exceeded the figures for Catholic services by the 1930s.<sup>15</sup> While religious affiliation did not necessarily decline, falling Sunday school attendance figures were another clue to the lessening significance of religion in daily lives.<sup>16</sup> Defensive manoeuvres against the new forms of recreation took various forms. Temperance societies protested about the installing of ‘listening-in’ radio sets in pubs in 1922.<sup>17</sup> The newly-created British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) privileged classical music over other music in its schedules, rescued the Proms from insolvency and subsidised opera companies, a strategy which research later showed appealed to a small minority of its audiences.<sup>18</sup> Film rendered some previously taboo subjects visible, leading to alarm about the large numbers of ‘less rational’ women might be easily manipulated.<sup>19</sup> Complaints in Birmingham about Sunday openings by cinemas, and the effects of films’ content, demonstrated that

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<sup>11</sup> Jones, *Workers at play*, 19-31; Sandra Dawson, ‘Working-Class Consumers and the Campaign for Holidays with Pay’, in *Twentieth Century British History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2007, 281-92; Susan Barton, *Working-class organisations and popular tourism*, 112-27.

<sup>12</sup> DL LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy: Mass Communication and the Cultivated Mind in Britain Between the Wars* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 12; 130; 228-9.

<sup>13</sup> TR Nevett, *Advertising in Britain: A History* (London: Heinemann, 1982), 149-59.

<sup>14</sup> Pugh, *We danced all night*, xi.

<sup>15</sup> Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend*, 113-4.

<sup>16</sup> McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 273.

<sup>17</sup> Graves and Hodge, *The Long Weekend*, 116.

<sup>18</sup> LeMahieu, *A Culture for Democracy*, 185-7.

<sup>19</sup> Rieger, *Technology and modernity*, 92-3.

‘the old nineteenth-century desire of a vociferous section of the middle class to impose on the masses the kind of leisure deemed good for them by their betters was still very strong and active in the 1930s’.<sup>20</sup> In sport, the lingering influence of Sabbatarianism helped to ensure that Sunday sport was not allowed on municipal land in much of the North and Midlands before 1939. As gambling on sport became increasingly popular, the National Anti-Gambling League condemned the habit as un-Christian.<sup>21</sup>

### *From World War II to the 1960s*

Even the ‘total’ nature of World War II did not mean an end to all holidays or the desire for them. In a survey of April 1941, around 40% of respondents apparently claimed to have taken a holiday at some point in 1939-40. Evidence from books, memoirs and letters, as well as visitor statistics for Blackpool (a well-established resort significantly distant from the front line), indicates that the numbers travelling for pleasure for much of the war may not have been far below peacetime levels.<sup>22</sup>

This heightened and reinforced desire to spend spare time on holiday remained evident even in the difficult economic circumstances of the late 1940s. The war and its aftermath took their toll on Britain’s economy: rationing continued, with cuts in bacon, poultry and egg rations; a currency crisis in 1947 led to further ration cuts; and the pound was devalued in mid-1949.<sup>23</sup> Foreign travel was banned for eight months between mid-1947 and early 1948.<sup>24</sup> The new Labour government introduced restrictions on the amount of money that British citizens could take abroad on holiday, limits which remained – albeit at higher levels – into the 1950s.<sup>25</sup> However, a Hulton press survey of 1947 found that 56.4% of respondents took holidays away from home that year – including significant numbers of unskilled workers and pensioners. This had become possible partly because, by the end of 1946, 11-12 million workers were entitled to paid holidays under collective

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<sup>20</sup> Jeffrey Richards, ‘The cinema and cinema-going in Birmingham in the 1930s’, in Walton and Walvin (eds.), *Leisure in Britain*, 40-9.

<sup>21</sup> Huggins and Williams, *Sport and the English*, 11-17.

<sup>22</sup> Chris Sladen, ‘Wartime Holidays and the “Myth of the Blitz”’, in *Cultural and Social History* 2005, Vol. 2, 226-38.

<sup>23</sup> David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain 1945-51* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008), 106-7, 226-46, 350.

<sup>24</sup> Dawson, *Holiday camps*, 176.

<sup>25</sup> Barton, *Working-class organisations*, 207-8.



agreements or statutory orders, with many more being covered in other ways (though, for most manual workers, this might only mean a week's paid holiday).<sup>26</sup>

The outlook for consumption, leisure and the travel and tourism industry gradually brightened, as the British economy slowly but steadily recovered from war and its aftermath. As early as 1951, a Rowntree and Lavers survey in York estimated that only 3% of the city's population was in poverty, compared with around a third in 1936. That year's census showed 28% of the population categorised as middle-class, compared with 22% twenty years before.<sup>27</sup> In the five years to 1952, radio licence ownership rose gently from 10.7 million to 11.2 million, along with a rather more dramatic rise in TV licence ownership from 15,000 to 1.45 million.<sup>28</sup> Average weekly earnings in the second half of the 1950s rose by 34% while retail prices rose in the same period by only 15%.<sup>29</sup>

This greater prosperity was eventually reflected in holiday entitlements and holidaymaking. Between 1964 and 1969, the proportion of working people enjoying a basic paid holiday entitlement of between two and three weeks per year rose from 7% to 35%.<sup>30</sup> The British Travel Association (BTA) estimated that British holidaymakers took five million holidays of four nights or more abroad in 1968, compared with 1.5 million in 1951. During the same period, the comparable figure for holidays in the UK also grew, from 25 million to 30 million. The BTA concluded that 'Holidaymakers in Britain [were] rather younger, more prosperous, better educated and of slightly higher socio-economic status than the average British adult', while 'Holidaymakers abroad [were] younger, more prosperous, better educated and of higher socio-economic status than holidaymakers in Britain'. For UK holidays, the growth of private car ownership, and the end of petrol rationing in 1950, helped to increase the proportion of UK holidays taken by car from 27% to 66% between 1951 and 1968, with the proportions using coach and especially train falling substantially. For foreign holidays, the fifties and sixties saw Spain become increasingly popular, no doubt partly as a result of its abolition in 1959 of the need for an entry visa. The popularity of other countries such as France and, to a lesser

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<sup>26</sup> Walton, *The British seaside*, 61-2.

<sup>27</sup> David Kynaston, *Austerity Britain*, 32, 144-5.

<sup>28</sup> Peter Hennessey, *Having it so good: Britain in the Fifties* (London: Penguin, 2007), 112.

<sup>29</sup> Cited in Bray and Raitz, *Flight to the Sun*, 23.

<sup>30</sup> Walton, *The British seaside*, 62.

extent, Switzerland, declined in relative terms. The proportion of holidaymakers leaving Britain by air rose from 40% to 54% between 1960 and 1968.<sup>31</sup>

### **The tourism industry develops**

The burgeoning travel and tourism industry experienced a period of change between the wars, involving established players and new entrants to the market. Thomas Cook made substantial profits immediately after the war, becoming a limited company in 1923 with £1 million of share capital before being sold to Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits of Belgium for £3.5 million in 1928. The Great Depression hit the firm hard as it made a £200,000 loss in 1931.<sup>32</sup> Sir Henry Lunn recalled that the suspension of the Gold Standard that year ‘sounded the death-knell of foreign travel for the time being... Our business for the winter months fell 90 per cent’. Nonetheless, Alpine Sports Ltd survived with Lunn’s son Arnold as chairman; Lunn himself remained chairman of the Hellenic Travellers’ Club.<sup>33</sup> Worries within the travel and tourism industry about the effects of economic uncertainty in the early 1930s prompted the creation of the Creative Tourist Agents Conference (CTAC), whose members included Thomas Cook, Dean and Dawson, Frames, Sir Henry Lunn, Pickfords, the Wayfarers Touring Agency and the WTA. Ronald Studd was CTAC’s first Chairman.<sup>34</sup>

New travel agencies continued to spring up – several from the roots of their predecessors. Although the CHA continued to operate, its founder TA Leonard felt that ‘despite our working-class origins we were becoming rather middle-class in spirit and conservative in ideas’. He resigned his CHA role in 1913 to set up a sister organisation, the Holiday Fellowship (HF). The new agency planned to return holidays to their original CHA basics. Rules for 1930s holidaymakers included a prohibition on intoxicating drinks; and guests cleaning their own boots, waiting at table, preparing meals or washing up once a week. The 1936 AGM passed a motion allowing the use of gramophones in certain centres - despite much opposition. HF had 82 affiliated groups by the late 1930s.<sup>35</sup> Meanwhile Cecil Rogerson, a minor official in the League of Nations Union, had an idea for a ‘Labour Travel

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<sup>31</sup> British Travel Association, *Patterns in British holidaymaking 1951-1968* (London: British Travel Association, 1969), 9, 13, 18, 27-9; Walton, *The British seaside*, 89; Barton, *Working-class organisations*, 201.

<sup>32</sup> Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, 259-69.

<sup>33</sup> Lunn, *Nearing harbour*, 312-8.

<sup>34</sup> Studd, *The Holiday Story*, 147.

<sup>35</sup> Leonard, *Adventures in holiday making*, 53-4; Wroe, *The story of HF Holidays*, 20-1.

Association' which could promote foreign travel by workers and contact with workers in other nations, support League of Nations and ILO ideals and strengthen the Labour Party 'by additional ties of co-operative effort and friendship'. After discussing the idea with JJ Mallon, the Warden at Toynbee Hall, Rogerson obtained enough support from labour-leaning organisations to help him set up a Workers' Travel Association (WTA) – a successor to the Toynbee Travellers' Club and the Toynbee Workmen's Travelling Club - in 1921. By the late 1930s, its turnover was in excess of £600,000 per annum.<sup>36</sup> Like Thomas Cook, the WTA expanded its use of motor coaches in the 1930s, although rail was still the dominant mode of transport in its tour programmes.<sup>37</sup>

The CHA, HF and WTA all enjoyed substantial membership increases during the 1930s, as did three organisations which we may consider broadly as part of an inter-war 'outdoor movement': the Camping Club of Great Britain; the Cyclists' Touring Club (originally founded in 1878 as the Bicycle Touring Club); and the Youth Hostels Association (YHA), founded in 1930. Despite its avowed working-class credentials, research into some YHA holidays indicated that a steadfastly middle-class mix of teachers, clerks and students may have formed a substantial proportion of its holidaymakers, due to the costs of membership, camping equipment and so on.<sup>38</sup> Rambling, another popular interwar outdoor leisure activity, was 'an antidote to the quickening speed of the modern machine age'. Unlike previous eras when it utilised the virtues of solitude, early twentieth century rambling was a communal experience, at least according to one historian.<sup>39</sup>

Another attempt to make a commercial success of cheap holidays for workers came to fruition in the interwar years: the holiday camp. This was an idea with a nineteenth-century pedigree which various organisations such as the Civil Service Clerical Association (CSCA) and the National Association for Local Government Officers (NALGO) adopted for their members.<sup>40</sup> Harry Warner and Billy Butlin each created their own chains of holiday camps in the 1930s, devoid of political or religious links and appealing to families on limited budgets. Although they attracted

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<sup>36</sup> Leonard, *Adventures in holiday making*, 141-2; Williams, *Journey into Adventure*, 13-22, 113.

<sup>37</sup> Walton, 'The origins of the modern package tour?', 151-2.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, *Workers at play*, 64-7; Taylor, *A claim on the Countryside*, 156.

<sup>39</sup> Trentmann, 'Civilization and its Discontents', 587-9.

<sup>40</sup> Ward and Hardy, *Goodnight Campers!*, 2-14, 45. See also Dawson, *Holiday camps in twentieth-century Britain*, 50.

criticism from FR Leavis and George Orwell as alleged symbols of Americanisation, Warner's and Butlin's holiday camps were successfully established by 1939.<sup>41</sup>

When peace came in 1945, it soon became clear that Warner and Butlin were in the right place at the right time: the war had 'presented an unexpected bonanza for holiday-camp entrepreneurs'.<sup>42</sup> Even before the war, government support for holiday camps had been demonstrated by the 1939 Camps Act which specified that a total of 50 new camps would be built, those in England and Wales under the new National Camps Corporation Ltd. The government saw holiday camps as having educational benefits. By 1940, 31 camps had been built in England and Wales and five in Scotland. The English and Welsh were let to local education authorities and used, in effect, as schools during the war.<sup>43</sup> After war broke out, Warner and Butlin each voluntarily closed their camps, which were requisitioned for use by troops prior to deployment. Both worked for the Ministry of Supply, overseeing the construction of camps for service personnel. Butlin in particular found suitable sites for military training camps and negotiated to buy them from the government at the end of the war. He was also given wartime responsibility to promote 'Holidays at Home'. Although not all holiday camps were re-opened and ready for business in 1946, astute use of wartime supplies helped to ensure that Butlin and Warner could take full advantage of the post-war landscape. Visitor numbers to holiday camps soon rose to over 1.2 million per year, with over 200,000 bookings for 1948 being declined due to lack of capacity. Bookings continued to rise into the early 1950s. Affordability was the key. A Tourist Board survey in 1949 calculated the average cost of a holiday in Britain at £11 5s 2d per person. Warner's camps on the Isle of Wight and in Devon charged only £5 10s per person per week, with discounts for children, while the Hayling Island camp charges varied between £4 10s and £5.<sup>44</sup>

Other firms, affected to different degrees by the war, attempted to resume their operations and either to profit from the holiday camp boom or to expand in other ways. The WTA – who had also had key figures working in governmental roles during the war - more than doubled its share capital within ten years. It opened a camp of its own, Rustington Lido on the South Coast. This was part of a continuing domestic focus; even by 1960, foreign holidays accounted for less than a

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<sup>41</sup> Dawson, *Holiday camps*, 50-110.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, *Holiday camps*, 123.

<sup>43</sup> Ward and Hardy, *Goodnight Campers!*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> Dawson, *Holiday camps*, 122-48, 177-83.

third of its operations.<sup>45</sup> The Holiday Fellowship was able to send four tour groups of limited size to Norway in the summer of 1946. Its main post-war innovation was the introduction of special interest holidays focusing on literature, music and other subjects. While turnover of more than £250,000 was a huge advance on the modest £50,000 of 1940, the Fellowship still predominantly focused on domestic holidays, with 34 UK centres and eighteen abroad.<sup>46</sup> Times were perhaps more turbulent for Thomas Cook, whose ‘bewildering variety’ of tactics to recover from the early 1930s slump had included building a holiday camp at Prestatyn. In the wake of the 1947 freeze on foreign holidays, Thomas Cook was brought under government control, as was Dean and Dawson, with the two firms being largely amalgamated.<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, the growth of competition in the travel and tourism industry was underlined by the formation in 1950 of the Association of British Travel Agents (ABTA). The new association’s first chairman was James Maxwell of Thomas Cook; its first-vice-chairman was Ronald Studd. The latter argued that the existing Institute of Travel Agents (ITA) gave small companies too much influence at the expense of larger companies. Studd’s appointment, as with his CTAC chairmanship between the wars, and the sentiments expressed here reflected the PTA’s size and status.<sup>48</sup>

After the austerity years of the late 1940s, the following two decades saw significant growth in the British public’s take-up of holidays. Technological economic drivers were an important contributor to this trend. Wartime had seen the improvement of air transport technology, with planes flying faster and more safely than before. The end of the war created spare aircraft capacity.<sup>49</sup> Vladimir Raitz (1922-2010) and his new firm, Horizon Holidays, gained a seven year licence for flights to Corsica and Majorca, in the teeth of objections from British European Airways (BEA). In 1952, European carriers belonging to the Independent Air Transport Association (IATA) agreed to introduce reduced fare tourist class seats, with the result that the costs of flights between the UK and Italy were reduced by 20-25%, UK/Spain seats by 18-21% and UK/Switzerland seats by 20%. Four years later, the currency allowances for travellers abroad were extended in USA and ‘dollar area’ countries such as Canada.<sup>50</sup> After its registration in 1948 with a capital sum of £100, Eagle Aviation and its owner Harold Bamberg (b.1923) established themselves

<sup>45</sup> Williams, *Journey into Adventure*, 142-56.

<sup>46</sup> Wroe, *HF Holidays*, 24-5.

<sup>47</sup> Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, 273-82.

<sup>48</sup> ABTA, 23-4.

<sup>49</sup> Barton, *Working-class organisations*, 200-1.

<sup>50</sup> Bray and Raitz, *Flight to the Sun*, 17, 36-52.

as short-haul operators, carrying loads which varied from cherries to circus animals. In 1950, Eagle had an 'associate agreement' with BEA to start a scheduled service to Jersey. By the following year, Eagle was winning contracts from the Air Ministry for regular contract flights, its staff numbered 100 (including twelve pilots) and share capital totalled £50,000. Early in 1955, Bamberg bought Sir Henry Lunn Ltd outright, having become its Chairman and Managing Director the previous year.<sup>51</sup>

### **Semi-detached: keeping the Polytechnic in Polytechnic Touring**

By the time that war came in 1914, the PTA had changed its legal status. On 29 September 1911, it was registered as a company limited by shares, the shareholders and directors being JEK Studd, Douglas Hogg and Robert Mitchell, each holding one share.<sup>52</sup> Later in the year, £7,500 of share capital was raised, with 7,500 shares worth £1 each being allotted in equal thirds between the same three individuals. The registered office was 309 Regent Street (in other words, the company was based at the Polytechnic). The Articles of Association referred to continuing support for the Polytechnic, declaring that its objects would include:

To support and subscribe to any charitable and public object and any institution, society or club which may be for the benefit of the Company or its employees or may be connected with any town or place where the Company carries on business, and in particular to assist the Polytechnic Institute of 309, Regent Street in the County of London, or the Members thereof or any branch or society in connection therewith by giving donations, subscriptions or otherwise assisting as the Company may think fit...<sup>53</sup>

There is no specific document, chain of correspondence or file which states definitively why the Polytechnic chose to give the PTA private status while retaining control in this way. Part of the answer may lie in the increasing pressures relating to external funding and regulation, particularly after Hogg's death in 1903. London County Council (LCC) began to investigate educational provision across the capital, in the hope of creating a more organised and integrated - and less wasteful - model. In 1909 its education officer R Blair voiced concerns that some polytechnics had made changes to their provision without consulting the council and subsequently had asked for grants in excess of what 'is contemplated by the Council's regulations'. He

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<sup>51</sup> David Hedges, *The Eagle Years 1948-1968* (West Drayton: TAHS, 2001), 5-16.

<sup>52</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Memorandum and Articles of Association*, 7.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

proposed that the Council should insist on being consulted in such cases and that polytechnic governing bodies should submit estimates for each financial year. His report recommended that the Polytechnic's university-level arts courses should cease to run as they duplicated provision at Birkbeck. Blair described the Polytechnic, slightly ominously, as a 'complex problem'.<sup>54</sup> In the same year, Michael Heller has noted, the LCC stated it would no longer fund the social and recreational side of polytechnics, leaving funding of those activities to the City Parochial Foundation (CPF) and obliging the Polytechnic to prepare two annual sets of accounts in future.<sup>55</sup>

Perhaps Studd, Mitchell and Douglas Hogg felt that remote control of a nominally private and independent PTA would enable the Polytechnic to continue to benefit from its profitability without attracting further scrutiny – and possibly punitive regulation – from external funding bodies. Whether coincidentally or not, there was less coverage of PTA activities in the *Polytechnic Magazine* after Quintin Hogg's death in 1903. The reunion event reports continued, but promotional editorial and notes on Polytechnic/PTA holidays diminished in regularity and length. A 1910 'Gossip note' was almost perfunctory: 'The various tours organised by the Poly for the members and public generally have been most successful, and in spite of the abnormal weather, have been more largely patronised than ever.'<sup>56</sup>

Towards the end of 1921, the Polytechnic took another major step towards ensuring continuing links with the PTA. It announced that Mitchell would be retiring the following July and that Ronald Studd (1889-1956), JEK Studd's second son, would be leaving the Navy in order to work on the holiday tours and to take over from Mitchell after two years:

We are not only glad to have Lieut-Commander Ronald Studd associated with the Poly, but specially glad that if a new member had to be associated with the Poly Tours it should be one so thoroughly in sympathy with Poly ideals.<sup>57</sup>

Readers of the *Polytechnic Magazine* would already have been familiar with the early career exploits of Ronald Studd, having been informed of him gaining his

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<sup>54</sup> LMA ref. LCC/EO/HFE/09011 R Blair, 'The Polytechnics and some other institutions' – report to the Polytechnics and evening schools sub-committee of the London County Council Education Committee, 6 May 1909, 15, 26, 31.

<sup>55</sup> Heller, 'The Institute and the Polytechnic', in Penn (ed.), *Educating Mind, Body and Spirit*, 52.

<sup>56</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1910, 111.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, November 1921, 239; December 1921, 258.

commission with the Navy and his subsequent appointment as War Staff Officer on *HMS Hood*.<sup>58</sup> In hindsight, Ronald Studd emphasised a personal involvement with the Polytechnic and the PTA going back to his childhood.<sup>59</sup>

The PTA's links with the Polytechnic in terms of ownership, management and finances remained strong between the wars. JEK Studd had become Chairman of the PTA as well as President of the Polytechnic after Quintin Hogg's death in 1903.<sup>60</sup> Like JEK, Ronald assumed dual Polytechnic / PTA responsibilities. In early 1923, he addressed the (suggestively titled) Spring Family Gathering.<sup>61</sup> Two years later, he became a member of the Polytechnic Governing Body; he was re-appointed in 1935 and again in 1940. While JEK Studd was away in India in late 1927, with Douglas McGarel Hogg acting in his stead, Ronald was Douglas's deputy.<sup>62</sup> Ronald Studd bought out Mitchell's interest in the PTA in 1929, at which point Mitchell was no longer a Director of the company. Mitchell's successor at the Polytechnic as Director of Education, Major Thomas Worswick, became a PTA Director in 1926 but died in 1932; Eric Studd became a PTA Director in 1939.<sup>63</sup> By 1930, the PTA had moved from its offices on the first floor of the Regent Street buildings and was a tenant of part of the Polytechnic properties in Balderton Street.<sup>64</sup> Echoing the pre-war pattern of holiday prices for members and students with an extra charge for others, the firm now offered a 5% discount on its standard prices to members and students.<sup>65</sup> PTA financial contributions to the Polytechnic, interrupted by war, resumed in 1921. For the rest of the 1920s and 1930s, 'special donations per JEK Studd' – which we may reasonably deduce refer to PTA donations - totalled £28,250.

**Table 4: PTA donations to the Polytechnic (£), 1921-1939<sup>66</sup>**

1921	2,750	1925	1,500	1931	2,000	1938	2,000
1922	2,000	1926	2,000	1932	2,000	1939	1,500
1923	2,500	1927	2,000	1934	2,000		
1924	2,000	1928	2,000	1937	2,000		

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, September 1915, 213; July 1920, 93.

<sup>59</sup> Studd, *The Holiday Story*, 9-19, 60, 69.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, 60.

<sup>61</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1923, 63.

<sup>62</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 25 June 1925, 454; 27 October 1927, 28; 15 July 1935, 12; 28 October 1940, 163.

<sup>63</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Register of Directors or Managers* 1926, 1929 and 1932.

<sup>64</sup> UWA/RSP/1/BG, 20 January 1930, 66-7.

<sup>65</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, October 1927, 223.

<sup>66</sup> Sources: UWA/RSP/3/1/13 Polytechnic accounts 1904-1920; UWA/RSP/3/1/14 Polytechnic accounts 1920-1931; UWA/RSP/3/1/15 Polytechnic accounts 1931-1966. Accounts are not available for 1929-30, 1933 and 1935-6.



The full interwar total, when taking the missing years into account, may have been significantly higher, as JEK Studd suggested in 1938:

The difference between bread and butter and jam through all these years has been made possible by the Polytechnic Touring Association. Do you know that they have contributed to your help and comfort over £42,000 since 1921? You have not realised it.<sup>67</sup>

This reminder of the financial value of the tours in what the Polytechnic termed the PTA's 'Jubilee Year' was one example of the parent institution's attempts via communications with its members and students to historicise the travel agency, while also explaining its significance in itself and its links to the Polytechnic. The most explicit example of this process was an article from October 1927, which traced the PTA's origins back to Mitchell's Swiss initiative in 1888 and, before that, a walking tour in Wales by Pelham and Quintin Hogg's hosting of parties of boys or members at his holiday home. The article claimed – less than truthfully – that the PTA had 'always had a financial existence and organisation entirely independent of the Polytechnic'. It called on Polytechnic members who lived outside Britain to act as 'Poly Ambassadors' and recommend that business or personal contacts should "'Travel Polytechnic'".<sup>68</sup> Subsequent articles placed the PTA in the context of a 'spirit of adventure' typified in centuries past by Drake, Raleigh and Frobisher, and explained the origins of the Lucerne chalets.<sup>69</sup> Ten years later, the LCC's chairman addressed a celebratory Jubilee lunch at the Ritz; and the *Polytechnic Magazine* included a 'Jubilee Cavalcade', a chronology of significant PTA-related events between 1888 and 1938 (JEK Studd's year as Mayor of London in 1929 being one of the more curious listings).<sup>70</sup> Tributes, notices of retirement and obituaries for Polytechnic figures such as JH Deas, Frank Short, Paul Hasluck, Major Worswick and David Woodhall, who had been involved in the tours from their early days, indirectly emphasised the PTA's longevity.<sup>71</sup> The Polytechnic's programme of events included PTA educational and social initiatives: travel lectures in the Fyvie Hall and the resumption from late 1923 of the tour reunions. The latter attracted up to 4,000 guests per event, although no reunions occurred in 1933 'owing to the great

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<sup>67</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, January 1938, 4.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid*, October 1927, 222.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid*, April 1928, 102; June 1928, 160.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, March 1938, 41, 43.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid*, October 1929, 272; May 1931, 86-7; April 1932, 51; May 1935, 91.

depression' (i.e. its presumably deleterious effects on tour sales).<sup>72</sup> One interwar innovation was a special dinner, initially for PTA office staff and later including tour conductors.<sup>73</sup> The PTA made one-off displays for the Polytechnic's annual fete and exhibition and even formed its own amateur dramatic society.<sup>74</sup>

On the other hand, the continuity of strong Polytechnic-PTA links did not preclude some operational tension. In late 1937, JEK Studd was informed that chartered surveyors had estimated the annual rentable value of the Balderton Street space at £1200, compared with the £920 the PTA had been paying since 1930.<sup>75</sup> The PTA had recently renewed a deed of covenant to pay the Polytechnic £2,000 per annum for the next seven years. These financial issues were raised at a sub-committee meeting of Polytechnic governors on 17 December 1937, with Ronald Studd present. Speaking in his PTA role, Ronald Studd claimed that publicity for PTA tours 'had contributed very largely to make the name of the Polytechnic a household one' and that the PTA continued to make donations to the Polytechnic despite 'no longer receiv[ing] any clerical assistance from the Polytechnic'. This last comment was met with scepticism: another sub-committee meeting on 1 February 1938 considered a list of services recently supplied to the PTA including use of halls and committee rooms and the supply of typewriters. The disagreement resurfaced after World War II.<sup>76</sup>

After the war, some promotional links with the Polytechnic remained. A series of travel lectures was announced for Saturdays in the first three months of 1949, to be held at the Polytechnic's Fyvie Hall.<sup>77</sup> The Polytechnic's film-making facilities may have been used in the making of a series of promotional films on various PTA holiday destinations, of which three – for Austria, Paris and Fort William – survive today. The PTA's promotional films were still being shown 'at principal towns all over the country' almost a decade later.<sup>78</sup>

The PTA moved out of the Polytechnic's Balderton Street site to 'more commodious premises' at 73 Oxford Street in early 1950 – its first steps off

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<sup>72</sup> For lists of travel lectures, see *ibid*, February 1924, 37; January 1928, 13. For coverage of tour reunions, see for example *ibid*, November 1923, 198; February 1925, 15; November 1930, 259; February 1934, 24; January 1939, 2.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid*, December 1923, 219, 222; December 1924, 220; November 1930, 259.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, January 1930, 2, 5; January 1931, 3.

<sup>75</sup> UWA/RSP/2/2/8/2 Letter from C McKenna to JEK Studd, 1 December 1937, Correspondence with regard to Balderton Street.

<sup>76</sup> UWA/RSP/2/2/8/4 *Lease of Balderton Street premises by the Polytechnic Touring Association, 1937–1950*.

<sup>77</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/19, 38.

<sup>78</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/27, 39.

Polytechnic premises.<sup>79</sup> As far as senior management and ownership was concerned, the firm remained under the control primarily of the Studd and Hogg families. Eric Studd became Managing Director of the PTA on the death of his brother Ronald in 1956.<sup>80</sup> Douglas Hogg had died in 1950 and his son Neil became a PTA Director in 1957. By 1959, the majority of shares were owned by Studds - Eric, Bernard and Eric's son Robert Kynaston Studd (1926-1977) - or by Ronald Studd's executors Hyman Stone and Douglas Waghorn. Neil Hogg owned 8,000 shares. The directors were Eric, Bernard and Robert Kynaston Studd (Deputy General Manager), Neil Hogg, Reginald May (General Manager), Hyman Stone, Lionel Christie and Harry Greenfield.<sup>81</sup> The firm had changed its name to Poly Travel on 1 April 1958.<sup>82</sup>

The Hoggs and Studds remained closely linked to the Polytechnic (with Bernard Studd succeeding Douglas Hogg as President of the Polytechnic).<sup>83</sup> The PTA continued to 'donate' between £1304 and £1428 per annum to the Polytechnic throughout the 1950s.<sup>84</sup> However, the link between the two organisations was not as strong as in the past. The PTA's Polytechnic links began to be perceived within the latter as part of the past. A Polytechnic report included a suggestion to resume Holiday Homes with a Polytechnic identity 'at a cost lower than Touring Association charges.'<sup>85</sup> The *Polytechnic Magazine* published various items of a nostalgic bent: publicity for Ronald Studd's book *The Holiday Story*; a short history of the PTA acknowledged that the travel agency and its parent institution had 'drift[ed] somewhat apart'; mentions of joint Old Member's Association/PTA events; and an obituary of Mr A Davis Smith, a PTA staff of 44 years' standing who had been a Polytechnic member.<sup>86</sup> By 1953, PTA advertising had virtually disappeared from the *Magazine*.

As it strove to differentiate itself from competitors, the PTA fell back on several occasions on its traditional values and longevity while issuing reminders of its self-styled pioneering reputation. The inside cover of one brochure referred in self-historicising terms to 'Poly Tours 1888-1950'.<sup>87</sup> An editorial in a 1958 brochure

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<sup>79</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, January 1950, 4.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, March 1956, 80.

<sup>81</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Annual Return 1959; Appointment of New Directors* 30 April 1957, 22 October 1957.

<sup>82</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Special Resolution at an Extraordinary General Meeting*, 1 April 1958.

<sup>83</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, March 1950, 81.

<sup>84</sup> UWA/RSP/3/1/15 Polytechnic accounts 1931-1966.

<sup>85</sup> UWA PIN [ACC1996/15/6] Suggestion by Harry Ferris of the Old Member's Association, *Men's Council Interim Report on Post-War Planning*, 1945.

<sup>86</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, February 1950, 43; March 1951, 70-1; March 1952, 69; October 1955, 317.

<sup>87</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/31.

wished the firm 'Many Happy Returns' on its 70<sup>th</sup> birthday (underneath a photo of Sir Eric Studd, who had been born a year before the 1888 Swiss trip).<sup>88</sup> The approach of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1888 Switzerland trip prompted a restatement in the trade press of the firm's claims as a pioneer of accessible travel for the many:

When your grandfather was still in his cradle, Poly Travel Ltd (then called the Polytechnic Touring Association) gave birth to a new concept of travel. A concept that was to open up the exciting world of "abroad" to great-grandmother and all her friends and relatives... There are, of course, other travel agents. But Poly, with 75 years of experience behind them, can offer their clients just that much more in the way of service and quality.<sup>89</sup>

Arguably, reminding its target markets of its claims of pioneer status in its early days indirectly exposed the firm to the observation that such pioneering days were behind it. If we apply the litmus test of newness or innovation then – as we shall see in the next section – the PTA, latterly Poly Travel, might more accurately be described as contemporary rather than modern. Nonetheless, vestigial links with the Polytechnic remained - even after the PTA's acquisition in 1962. Sir Eric and Robert Kynaston Studd were directors of the company until 1967-8.<sup>90</sup> Perhaps as an astute public relations move by the firm's new owners, a renewed deed of covenant in 1963 promised to pay the Polytechnic £1,000 a year for seven years.<sup>91</sup>

### **Adaptation, imitation and a little innovation: the portfolio after 1911**

PTA operations all but ceased during World War I; the *Polytechnic Magazine* advertised Eastbourne and Folkestone holiday homes during the summer of 1915 but, by early 1917, such publicity was relegated to 'Our Small Advertisements'.<sup>92</sup> It was almost eighteen months after the Armistice that PTA activities resumed. The Polytechnic's inhouse magazine reported on a seven-day Easter 1920 trip to the battlefields of France and Belgium for a 25-strong party and announced that the Lucerne chalets would be open for a week at Whitsun. The prices of these tours were 16 guineas a head and 11.5 guineas a head respectively – a notable increase on pre-war prices, no doubt reflecting the bout of high inflation which had begun during

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<sup>88</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/27, 2.

<sup>89</sup> HAT JWT/GD/142 '75 and still travelling', *Travel Trade Directory* 1962.

<sup>90</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Notifications to the Registrar of Companies*, 30 September 1967 and 2 April 1968.

<sup>91</sup> UWA RSP/1/BG, meeting of 18 February 1963.

<sup>92</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, June 1915, 156; February 1917, 35.

the war and led to a 144% increase in retail prices since 1913.<sup>93</sup> The following year, Easter destinations included Paris and Rome as well as Lucerne and battlefield tours were repeated.<sup>94</sup>

The PTA now embarked on a long period under Ronald Studd's leadership, between 1924 and 1956, in which it would grow, adapt, follow some of its competitors' leads and, above all, survive. These themes can be discerned from Studd's recollections of early decisions to expand into Belgium and to bring motor tours to Switzerland. Belgium's proximity, its beaches, the existence of expatriate British ex-servicemen with useful local knowledge and the recent history embodied in the country's battlefields all emboldened Studd to expand PTA operations there – as did the knowledge that George Lunn was 'doing an important traffic there'. Studd admitted a personal 'nostalgic fascination' for Belgium.<sup>95</sup> He was determined to chase George Lunn's example by bringing motor tours to Switzerland. All in all, 'George Lunn was going to have a rival.'<sup>96</sup> Ronald Studd also decided to expand operations in Switzerland, buying two hotels, the Bristol and the Grindelwald, both in Grindelwald itself, in December 1923. The mortgage on the properties was paid off within eight years, which in itself may denote that the purchases were justified in business terms.<sup>97</sup>

This pragmatic tendency is also detectable through an analysis of the PTA's promotional brochures from the interwar period. The most obvious change in the brochures, particularly those covering foreign holidays, was their size. The 1923 brochure ran to 64 pages; by the late 1920s and early 1930s this had grown to 100 pages or more. As Britain recovered from the early 1930s economic crisis, brochure growth continued, with the 1939 foreign holidays brochure running to well over 200 pages (the British tours brochure for that year was just over 50 pages).<sup>98</sup> On the other hand, the first and largest section for any country in the brochures remained Switzerland. In addition to Lucerne, the 1938 brochure included trips to Brunnen, Engelberg, Fluelen, Grindelwald, Interlaken, Kandersteg, Locarno, Lugano, Montreux, Thun, Vevey, Weggis and Zermatt. Switzerland also featured in other

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<sup>93</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1920, 51-2; Feinstein, *National income, expenditure and output of the United Kingdom 1855-1965*, 140.

<sup>94</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, April 1921, 85-7; July 1921, 139.

<sup>95</sup> Studd, *The Holiday Story*, 119-21.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 100, 128.

<sup>97</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7 *Declaration verifying Memorandum of Satisfaction of Mortgage or Charge*, 28 April 1931.

<sup>98</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/4; UWA/PTA/2/1/9; UWA/PTA/2/1/16; UWA/PTA/2/1/17.

sections of the brochure: the ‘extended and miscellaneous tours’ combined it with Belgian, French, German and Italian locations, as did the ‘Two-Country Holidays’ options, which also offered combinations of Austrian and Swiss resorts. A reasonable estimate would be that probably half or more of the PTA’s European holidays between the wars featured Switzerland in some shape or form. Belgium, France, Germany and Italy were the other principal European locations. Norway, a mainstay of early Poly/PTA cruises, merited only two pages of holiday options in the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary programme.<sup>99</sup>

The PTA made it a priority – as it had done before the war - to promote its services as offering both competitive prices and value for money. This led to some nimble rhetorical flip-flopping, depending on the prevailing economic circumstances and particularly exchange rates. The 1933 foreign holidays brochure explained ‘How the Polytechnic is beating the rate of exchange’, keeping prices low by abolishing High Season Fees in Switzerland and reducing them elsewhere (another hint as to the primacy of Switzerland in the portfolio); offering discounts of 10-25% at many resort shops, cinemas and concerts; and arranging the option of third-class travel ‘to Lucerne and other centres’ for those of limited means.<sup>100</sup> Four years later, in one of the many editorials credited to Ronald Studd, he proclaimed that ‘the rising pound has opened up the whole of Europe’, enabling the programme to include new holiday centres, the extension of bathing facilities for Belgian coast holidays and the free services of qualified guides for walking and climbing holidays.<sup>101</sup>

However, just as the pre-1911 PTA tour programme included a number of more expensive and lengthy holidays, this was the case between the wars as well. As early as 1923, de luxe Swiss hotels were available for a week for up to 19 guineas, while a ‘Grand Month’s Tour’ of Switzerland, France and Italy would set holidaymakers back by up to 43 guineas. Even ten years later, as the PTA emphasised its low prices, it offered cruises combined with continental tours for £25 and over.<sup>102</sup> While the extent of the take-up of these various touring options is unknown, the consistent offer of a portfolio of holidays designed to appeal to those (by implication) with a wide range of available time and disposable income offered a point of continuity with the pre-war era.

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<sup>99</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/15.

<sup>100</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/9, 2-3.

<sup>101</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/14, 4-5.

<sup>102</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/4, 31-3, 48-9; UWA/PTA/2/1/9, 90-1.

In some respects the PTA's programme was innovative – or, at least, adapted to technological developments and industry trends. Motor tours of the Loire and, inevitably, Switzerland appeared in the 1923 brochure, and had spread to Austria, Germany and Holland within fifteen years. They also accounted for around a quarter of the content of the British Isles brochures of the late 1930s, with motor tours of Northern Ireland and a combination of the New Forest, the Wye Valley and 'Shakespeare Country' among the attractions.<sup>103</sup> The PTA trumpeted what it described as 'the first escorted tour by air to Switzerland' in 1932.<sup>104</sup> Years later, the PTA brochure described the tours as 'a great success, although the time was not then ripe in this country for a general extension of this kind of holiday'.<sup>105</sup> Studd suggested that the motivation for the escorted air tours was a wish to keep British money circulating within British firms during the economic slump.<sup>106</sup> Exactly how innovative they were in 1932 is debatable; Thomas Cook, after all, had organised an escorted tour by plane between New York and Chicago five years earlier.<sup>107</sup> In similar imitative vein, a guarantee of a day's refund at Mentone in France in the event of half an hour or more of daytime rain was inspired by George Lunn's initiative.<sup>108</sup>

Overall, the interwar PTA portfolio summed itself up regularly as 'comfort and economy in travel'.<sup>109</sup> Other motifs echoed some of the Polytechnic values which had emerged in the early PTA years. Regular photos of Ronald Studd and personal messages from him were, perhaps, not as memorable as a 1929 full-length photograph of his father in London Mayoral regalia – an inadvertent reminder of hierarchical themes.<sup>110</sup> Brochures from the mid-1930s onwards featured brief personal profiles of PTA 'hosts' in various resorts, sketching out their knowledge of the relevant countries and their previous PTA experience. Over a dozen such hosts were elected as Fellows of the Royal Geographical Society, normally being proposed

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<sup>103</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/4, 30, 38; UWA/PTA/2/1/15, 4-5; UWA/PTA/2/1/17, 38-9.

<sup>104</sup> UWA/PTA/4/8 *The first escorted tour by air to Switzerland, in the world's largest passenger air liner, arranged by the Polytechnic Touring Association in conjunction with Imperial Airways Ltd: souvenir brochure.*

<sup>105</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/23 *To the Continent for Holidays: Poly Tours 1947*, 32-3.

<sup>106</sup> Studd, *The Holiday Story*, 144-6.

<sup>107</sup> Brendon, *Thomas Cook*, 259.

<sup>108</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/9, 3; Studd, *The Holiday Story*, 98, 148.

<sup>109</sup> For instance, UWA/PTA/2/1/7, 7; UWA/PTA/2/1/11, 2-4.

<sup>110</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/7, 6.

and seconded by fellow PTA hosts and staff such as Reginald May.<sup>111</sup> The host profiles, and the use after their names of the FRGS designation, neatly combined personal service with a reminder of the educational aspect of the PTA's origins. On the other hand, references to religion and spirituality more or less vanished from the promotional materials. The earliest surviving interwar brochure noted that the Sunday of a holiday at Fort William was a day of rest 'with services of all denominations at 11am' and that special services including English Church and Wesleyan options were available during a stay in Paris. But by 1934, the itinerary for a Swiss motor tour indicated that the Sunday of the itinerary involved travel and meals, with no hint of any interruption or postponement for religious observance.<sup>112</sup> This is not to say, of course, that such observance ceased. But we may, perhaps, suggest that the promotion of explicitly Christian practices was less important for the interwar private PTA firm than it had been when the travel agency had been developing within the Polytechnic.

Other aspects of PTA promotional editorial represented developments of pre-war themes or even moves away from them. One such theme was the potential of holidays for beneficial change:

This year, experience the splendid change which only foreign travel gives... Vivid impressions, rich memories, new dreams, all stored away to carry you through the winter. And remember, because you have been interested, others will find you interesting too.<sup>113</sup>

Here was something significantly different from the strictures of rational recreation. A holiday was, it seemed, no longer supposed solely to 're-create' or refresh the individual, but to provide new experiences which would change them. The traditional health benefits – particularly of taking the sea air, which Butlins was busy using to enthuse about the bracing qualities of Skegness – now included sunshine:

When planning a holiday there are three essentials to be considered... an absolute change of surroundings... a location amidst beautiful scenery, and one which forms a good centre for visiting interesting spots... But - the most important essential of all is that our holiday should be a health-giving one. In this connection sun and sea air are the greatest restoratives...<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> RGS Fellowship Certificates (ref. FC, election dates 1929-1937) for Annerley, Eric; Carrein, Fernand; Erwood, Alfred; Guy, William; Hepden, Norman; Holt, Max; Oakley, Albert; Percival, Harold; Pollock, Hugh; Rutland, Ralph; Sides, Henry; Snowden, Thomas; Wilson, Donald.

<sup>112</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/4, 37, 55; UWA/PTA/2/1/32, 36.

<sup>113</sup> *Polytechnic Magazine*, June 1927, 124.



PTA double-page spreads in the *Polytechnic Magazine* ran through the autumn and winter of 1927-8, with advertisements encouraging readers to find sunshine in Europe as an antidote to ‘fogs and influenza’ in England.<sup>115</sup> ‘In Search of Sunshine’ served as an umbrella theme (as it were) for articles extolling the virtues of Switzerland, Italy, Paris and Belgium. Advertisements played upon readers’ possible fear of loss, or at least of failing to keep up with their social equals: ‘YOU could motor in these mountains, too! Why lose these new experiences? Why miss all the fun?... They’ve got their holiday book. WHERE’S YOURS?’<sup>116</sup> Above all, holidays would be cheap and without difficulty, with the PTA taking care of the arrangements ‘leaving you free to get the utmost pleasure from your holiday.’<sup>117</sup> Polytechnic holidaymakers before the war had been less reluctant than the Polytechnic and PTA to prioritise the more hedonistic benefits of holidays; now the PTA approach had been adjusted. The occasional reminder that ‘Travel, beyond a doubt, is one of the most effective and pleasant means of education’ was now exceptional.<sup>118</sup>

Just as in World War I, the 1939-45 war brought the PTA to an effective halt, with Ronald Studd rejoining the Navy. In an echo of their usage in World War I, the PTA chalets at Lucerne were used by the Swiss government for civil defence.<sup>119</sup> When business resumed in peacetime, the 1947 brochures reflected a combination of the return of a PTA version of the *status quo ante bellum* and a large dose of pragmatic adjustment to changed circumstances. The foreign holidays brochure ran to 68 pages and the UK brochure to 32 pages, both significantly smaller than their 1939 counterparts. The former appeared in blue/black duotone apart from a full colour cover. Switzerland – with Lucerne the first entry in the section – remained the best-represented destination in terms of numbers of pages, followed by France and Belgium. Ronald Studd was at pains to mention improvements to existing properties such as ‘the most modern electric kitchens’ and brand new heating systems at Grindelwald. While the brochure used a section on inclusive holidays by air to remind readers of its 1932 experiment with escorted flights to Switzerland, it also hammered home the theme of restoration: ‘in 1947 our service will have come a long way back towards normal. Our houseparties are back. Our holiday hosts are

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<sup>114</sup> *Ibid*, October 1927, 223.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, December 1927, 270-1, 284.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, June 1928, 176; July 1928, 194.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, January 1930, 22.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, January 1928, 13.

<sup>119</sup> Studd, *The Holiday Story*, 159-64.

back. Our uniformed staff are back...’ The list of 31 principal agents for the company now included representatives in South Africa and Australia.<sup>120</sup>

The UK brochure, entirely in black and white and with the suggestively nostalgic sub-title *Polytechnic Programme*, led with the PTA-owned properties at Fort William and Penzance, followed by hotel accommodation in the South and South-West, but also in the North-West, Wales, Scotland and Ireland. Eric Studd was confirmed as being Ronald’s main adjutant at HQ with his other brother Bernard (1892-1962) ‘actively directing arrangements on the Continent.’ The editorial trumpeted ‘More Jolly Houseparties’ and ‘Carefree Camping Holidays’: at the same time both an attempt to resume its established format of holidays and a parallel attempt to adapt to new markets. In the former case, as Ronald Studd’s editorial put it, ‘Polytechnic hosts are in permanent residence and everything is arranged as a jolly houseparty’. Staying at the Highland Hotel, for example, would be ‘*Like a private party*’ whose hostess ‘makes even new visitors feel as if they were old friends reuniting at a private party’. The resident PTA representative would be on hand to organise ‘stirring excursions’ and ‘each evening there will be some pleasant social occasion – a dance, a cinema show, a whist drive or some other jolly way of rounding off the day.’ Facilities at Newquay, where ‘We have once more reserved the whole of the accommodation’, included cricket, 15 hard tennis courts, fishing, two theatres and three cinemas. Similar arrangements applied at Ilfracombe, Bournemouth, Shanklin and Ross-on-Wye. This would not have been unfamiliar to tourists on the early Polytechnic holidays: the chance to enjoy a change of scene, within a secure and friendly Polytechnic bubble and a ‘Polytechnic host’. Further UK holidays were available in Aberyswyth, Colwyn Bay and other Welsh resorts, and in the Lake District, albeit without the advertised benefit of a resident PTA host. However, Studd also admitted in his editorial that ‘tastes change’ and that holiday camps had ‘caught on’. A list of camps in Devon, Dorset, Somerset, Kent and Lancashire where the PTA had acquired booking rights was tucked away near the back of the publication. They offered ‘a different type of holiday from our usual ones’ for those ‘preferring the cabin to the hotel room and the atmosphere of almost non-stop communal gaiety to the more formal amenities of the “resorts.”’ Guests might have to keep their own rooms clean and ‘fetch [their] own hot water and morning tea, but it can be grand fun!’ Thus did the post-1945 PTA endeavour to

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<sup>120</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/23 *To the Continent for Holidays: Poly Tours 1947*, 2-3, 4, 8, 13-19, 32-3, inside back cover.

maintain or re-establish its traditional market for UK holidays while putting, as it were, one foot in another camp.<sup>121</sup>

While Switzerland remained prominent in overseas PTA destinations, its position of pre-eminence experienced slow and subtle erosion. By 1954, that year's brochure was listing similar numbers of holiday options in Italy, France, Austria and Spain. Four years later, the Switzerland section was not the first country section in the brochure, in contrast to virtually every other such publication since the PTA's earliest days.<sup>122</sup> By the end of the 1950s, *European Highways* demonstrated the expansion of the firm's motor tours, offering journeys through southern, western and central Europe and even through Russia and Finland. Spain had already been the subject of its own motor tour leaflet six years before. The reclining seats and radio facilities on each coach reflected PTA aspirations to supply a comfortable environment; so, no doubt, did the availability of an on-coach bar, a distant departure from the firm's temperance-based origins.<sup>123</sup> The PTA's promotional messages focused firmly on the enjoyment of comfort of their customers; if Ronald Studd or the firm as a whole believed that any educational or spiritual benefits derived from holidays, this remained unstated in the firm's communications.

The PTA's advertising also gave more prominence to appeals to 'irrational' motivations. Perhaps this was a reflection of what Frank Mort has described as the questioning of some of the standard assumptions of classical economics, particularly the existence of the rational consumer with perfect knowledge of the market.<sup>124</sup> An advertisement for the *News Chronicle* claimed: 'Romance is passing you by! Yes – if you want a holiday full of romance and sunlight, with the service and friendliness that only Poly know how to give, *now* is the time to book!'<sup>125</sup> Happiness might also, so another advertisement said, be passing the reader by:

The happiness of a holiday abroad [needs] the gaiety of good companions, the fascination of other lands, the splendour of great scenery – all this can be yours *this year* with Poly Travel. And with Poly you *double* the happiness of a holiday abroad.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/18 *Holidays in the Homeland: Polytechnic Programme 1947, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*, 3; 30.

<sup>122</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/39; UWA/PTA/2/1/27.

<sup>123</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/16; UWA/PTA/2/1/22, *ifc*.

<sup>124</sup> Frank Mort, 'The Commercial Domain: Advertising and the Cultural Management of Demand', in Conekin, Mort and Waters (eds.), *Moments of Modernity*, 69-73.

<sup>125</sup> HAT JWT/GD/142 'Romance is passing you by!', *News Chronicle*, 22 March 1954.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 'Is happiness passing you by?', regional newspapers in Plymouth, Cambridge, Norwich, Bradford, Bristol, Cardiff and Coventry, 28 February 1955.

Even a simple notification of the availability of the latest brochure became ‘news of the holiday that, deep down, you’ve always wanted’.<sup>127</sup> The larger advertising spaces were sometimes used for extended case studies and testimonials from customers such as Elizabeth Seal, whose holiday in Switzerland formed the subject of a pictorial essay with extended captions focusing on the new friends she made and the memories of the trip which she would retain forever.<sup>128</sup>

### **Expansion and status: a major industry player**

Detailed PTA accounts for its years as a privately-owned company do not survive in the archives. However, the available evidence suggests that the firm was reasonably successful over this period as a whole.

Some of the indications to this effect relate to the firm’s status or perceived status. There was the apparent growth of the PTA destinations portfolio in the 1920s and 1930s. There were Ronald Studd’s senior roles in two industry bodies, CTAC and ABTA, one between the wars and one after 1945.<sup>129</sup> Vladimir Reitz, a new entrant to the post-1945 industry, viewed ‘the Polytechnic’ as one of the major players.<sup>130</sup> Also, in the winter of 1947-8, the BBC Home Service broadcast two talks by Ronald Studd, introduced as ‘The Chairman of one of our big Travel Agencies’. In one of the talks Studd claimed that a personal visit to the USA had secured \$1 million of business (the equivalent of £250,000) and that the travel industry as a whole should attract \$100 million in 1948. Good personal service would be vital. Those worried about ‘the American invasion’ spoiling their own holidays should not be concerned, as ninety per cent of ‘our’ resorts would not be visited by Americans.<sup>131</sup> Although the second broadcast focused for the most part on practical tips for making the most of the £35 spending allowance on a foreign holiday – with Lausanne and Paris as examples – it returned to the ‘prime importance’ of American visitors as ‘a very important source of dollar earnings’.<sup>132</sup> Ronald Studd reflected the

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, ‘FREE! Facts about Poly’s “more-for-your-money holidays’, *Radio Times* 25 February 1955.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, ‘The happiest holiday of Elizabeth’s life!’, *Daily Express*, 4 January 1956.

<sup>129</sup> See page 169, 172.

<sup>130</sup> See pp.28-9

<sup>131</sup> *Topical Talk*, BBC Home Service, Thursday 11 December 1947: RG Studd, ‘American Visitors To Britain Next Year And The Dollars They’ll Bring’

<sup>132</sup> *Topical Talk*, BBC Home Service, Thursday 22 January 1948: RG Studd, untitled talk on how to spend £35 holiday money on the Continent.

following year with some satisfaction that the PTA had been ‘a great hit with our American friends’ in ‘doing our bit at earning dollars’.<sup>133</sup>

Little if any information survives about the firm’s day-to-day operations, but it is clear that a multi-layered management structure was in place by the middle of the 1950s.<sup>134</sup> This comprised a General Manager (Reginald May) and a Deputy General Manager; two Senior Managers; three Group Managers; and five Departmental Managers. The last-named were responsible for, respectively, hotels, air/rail, programme tours, ticketing and business & independent travel. Support departments included a typing pool, filing, accounts, personnel, advertising, a booking hall and shipping, the last of which was still based, along with a ticket counter on the ground floor, on Polytechnic premises in 309 Regent Street. Staff might begin in one department such as hotels and move on to work on programme tours or ticketing. Most ticketing staff were employed on a seasonal basis, though one or two might stay on for secondment to other departments. Starting pay in 1954 was £5 10s per week; by the early 1960s, a member of the office staff might earn between £9-11 per week. The firm ran an inhouse magazine and a social club which organised annual trips to the seaside.

By the mid-1950s the firm PTA had long since transcended its London origins, despite its head office remaining in the capital. In addition to nationwide film showings, a network of agents around the country and some TV advertising, its press advertising covered a comprehensive range of printed publications. These included national dailies such as the *Express*, *Mirror*, *Mail*, *News Chronicle*, *Telegraph*, *Sketch* and *Herald*; national Sunday newspapers such as the *Pictorial*, *Graphic*, *Observer*, *Times* and the *News of the World*; weeklies including the *Radio Times*, *Picture Post*, *Woman*, *Woman’s Own* and *TV Times*; specialised magazines such as the *Catholic Herald*, *Teacher’s World*, *Public Service* and the *Times Educational Supplement*; annual publications for civil servants, council staff, bank officers, insurance officials and teachers; over a dozen provincial dailies in towns and cities from Glasgow to Plymouth; and trade press including *Travel Topics*, *Travel Trade Gazette* and *Travel World*.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>133</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/19, 4.

<sup>134</sup> For what follows, I draw upon the recollections of Maurice and Sheila Steer, who worked for the PTA/Poly Travel between 1954 and 1964. The following summary is based upon an interview with Mr and Mrs Steer, 20 May 2011.

<sup>135</sup> HAT50/1/140/1/5 720 Undated internal J Walter Thompson memo with ‘summary of expenditure 1957’.

Data from the 1950s files of J Walter Thompson (JWT), the PTA's advertising agency, shows what a substantial business the PTA had become by this time. A summary of bookings for the year up to 26 March 1956 gave a total of over 44,000 bookings - around 3,000 lower than at the same point in 1955. Italy now accounted for more bookings than Switzerland, having apparently become the leading destination for PTA tourists in 1955.<sup>136</sup>

**Table 5: Principal destinations for PTA bookings 1955-1956<sup>137</sup>**

	1955	1956
Italy	11,232	9,430
Switzerland	10,062	9,219
Austria	4,534	5,031
Spain	3,921	4,088
France	4,562	3,660
Britain	3,128	3,628
Belgium	4,860	3,170
<i>Other significant destinations in terms of numbers: Scandinavia, Netherlands, Germany</i>		

Later that year, a PTA internal planning meeting, with Sir Eric Studd in the chair, estimated that final bookings for 1956 might be somewhere between the figures for 1954 and 1955 which, the meeting noted, were record years.<sup>138</sup> By mid-1958, a JWT memorandum reported a year-on-year fall from just over 45,000 bookings at the same point the previous year to just under 43,000. As in 1956, Italy and Switzerland accounted for almost half of all bookings between them, followed (distantly in numerical terms) by France, Belgium, Austria and Spain.<sup>139</sup>

Comparative data researched by JWT indicated that, in terms of advertising expenditure, the PTA was a major industry presence. One estimate for the period December 1955 – April 1956 placed it behind only Thomas Cook, the latter having spent around £40,000 and the PTA and Sir Henry Lunn Ltd each spending around £35,000.<sup>140</sup> A later comparison of first quarter data for 1953, 1954 and 1955

<sup>136</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/8 Memoranda dated 17 February 1955 (author Guy Cornwall-Jones) and 11 February 1955 (Derrick Cawston).

<sup>137</sup> HAT50/1/140/1/4 Appendix to report by RR May, 5 October 1955.

<sup>138</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/3 Minutes of Main Plans Conference 4-6 June 1956 at 73 Oxford Street.

<sup>139</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/8 Letter from Peter Gibson, Publicity Executive, to Derrick Cawston, 27 May 1958.

<sup>140</sup> HAT50/1/140/1/5 Undated JWT memorandum on advertising data.

confirmed Thomas Cook and the PTA as the largest spenders among a group of nine firms. In 1955, 'For the first time in three years, Poly [had] outspent Cooks by a narrow margin.'<sup>141</sup>

**Table 6: Press advertising expenditure (£), 1<sup>st</sup> quarters of 1953-1955, by PTA et al<sup>142</sup>**

	1953	1954	1955
PTA	21,720	28,059	29,915
Thomas Cook	27,903	29,168	29,193
Global	20,967	20,402	18,229
Lunn's	4,205	5,752	12,226
Blue Cars	4,705	13,016	10,819
Skytours	-	-	10,123
WTA	9,727	14,123	9,633
Fourways	1,006	6,841	9,000
Co-op	4,780	5,861	4,759

The data on advertising expenditure is noteworthy not only for the PTA outspending Thomas Cook, but also for substantially increased expenditure by other industry players such as Skytours and Fourways. One consequence of the PTA's growth, and of the entrance of new firms into the industry, was that the PTA's (or, from 1958, Poly Travel's) market share would come under attack from competitors and that its policies, practices and standards would come under scrutiny. The results were not always reassuring. John Purver of JWT gave his colleagues feedback on an air charter holiday to Corsica with Horizon. He praised the company's speed, efficiency and informality, noting that the PTA's stated concern 'for the safety of passengers travelling in out-of-date aircraft' operating in the air charter market did not appear to be based on strong evidence.<sup>143</sup> The praise for Horizon contrasted with more mixed feedback from PTA holidays to San Remo, marred by a hotel manager 'full of his own importance'; to Riccione, a tour beset by the late sending of tickets before departure, lack of Poly couriers on the outward journey, lack of hot water and lack of entertainment in the hotel, poor quality food and an inexperienced Poly hostess at the hotel (among other things); and Ostend, where 'the standard of food and service was

<sup>141</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/11 Memo from Guy Cornwall-Jones to various JWT colleagues, 19 May 1956.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid.

<sup>143</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/5 Memo from John Purver, 27 June 1957.

well below that of the other Houseparties'.<sup>144</sup> If the quality of personal service truly was a foundation of the PTA's operations, these were worrying findings.

The JWT files illustrate growing concerns, towards the end of the 1950s in particular, that the PTA's supposed strengths might not stand up against tough competition and a changing market environment. Sometimes these concerns came from within the PTA or its extended network. In response to a questionnaire, the vast majority of a sample of 73 agents selling Poly holidays agreed that competition from smaller independent air charter companies or motor coach companies hindered them in selling PTA inclusive tours.<sup>145</sup> Mr Sides, the PTA's manager in Italy, suggested to Purver 'that Poly might be content to stay as they are – in other words as a reputable family concern making as much money as they wanted and no more.'<sup>146</sup> If Sides' comments were justified – and we do not have evidence of the views of the firm's owners and senior managers on this point – then the achievement of a position as one of the market leaders may have led to a relative loss of ambition to innovate. Sides also appeared to blame the way in which the 'programme' - presumably the promotional brochures - had been written for a reduction in the numbers of younger clients in 1958 and 1959.<sup>147</sup> A briefing note from RR May to PTA staff almost four years earlier had referred to the large proportion of clients who were elderly (and who should therefore not be kept waiting unnecessarily for tickets and departure information) – another hint that PTA personal service had its faults.<sup>148</sup>

Competitive pricing – a strength on which the PTA had prided itself since the early days – was not immune from concern, either. When considering whether to recommend a rise in rates for premium package tours in peak seasons, H Paniguan reminded his JWT colleagues that the client was 'rather timid in this respect and believe their recent increases – up to 4/- per day – are already making them less competitive'.<sup>149</sup> A year later, the agency analysed prices for inclusive holidays with air travel, comparing the PTA's prices with those of Horizon, Sky Tours and Sir Henry Lunn Ltd and focusing on countries where PTA sales had been disappointing in 1958, namely Palma, the Costa Brava, San Remo and Montreux. It concluded that 'In every case where the holidays are strictly comparable the Poly price is higher'. In

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<sup>144</sup> HAT50/1/140/1/6 Memo from Mr LF Suitters 25 August 1953; Undated report on visit to Riccione; HAT50/1/140/1/1 Note from Paula Anderson, 27 July 1954.

<sup>145</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/8 Results of questionnaire to 73 agents, 7 February – 18 February 1958.

<sup>146</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/19 Memo from John Purver, 13 August 1959.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid, typed note of comments from Mr Sides, undated.

<sup>148</sup> HAT50/1/140/1/4 Report by RR May, 5 October 1955.

<sup>149</sup> HAT50/1/140/2/19 Memo from H Paniguan to various, 10 January 1958.



some cases the competitors' prices were over 10% lower than the PTA's; some air charter specialists' holidays were 20% cheaper. The report suggested that the expansion in some specialist air companies' capacity, an increase in customers' price consciousness and a decline in the number of bookings for inclusive continental travel might all have been contributory factors. It added a caveat that price was not the sole criterion on which holidaymakers made their decisions.<sup>150</sup> The absence of data from within the PTA and other travel agencies on how they costed, and hence priced, holidays prevents us from assessing the fundamental reasons why PTA holidays might have become dearer than those of their competitors. But JWT's efforts to explain why 'the Poly price' was relatively high imply that its client was worried by this development.

Perhaps even more fundamentally, some staff members within the agency came in time to question how well the PTA knew its own market. The aforementioned report on a 1953 Riccione tour stated that PTA tourists were 'of all classes, ages and types', including lone travellers as well as families and business people ranging from 'a Jewish tailor and his wife, daughter and son-in-law [to] a retired naval Commander and his wife, a research chemist and his wife [and] a fish and chip merchant and his family'.<sup>151</sup> The PTA's advertising in trade journals was at pains to stress the comprehensive reach of its promotions. Television advertising on ITV was used for the first time in 1958, a two-minute slot at the peak time of 9.28pm, drawing an estimated 5.5 million viewers. A year later, readers of *Travel Topics* and *Travel World* learned that '95% of the British public will see Poly advertising this year' (and that advertisement included a long list of the relevant publications).<sup>152</sup> However, near-ubiquitous advertising might suggest there was an absence of focus. By mid-1959, JWT staff members were engaged in internal debate on this subject. John Letts argued that the PTA lacked an 'exclusive proposition. Their tours aren't cheaper; they aren't more varied; they aren't significantly more exciting than the next agencies. But they are more reliable, and therefore better value...' He argued that the PTA should promote itself as looking after 'newcomers to foreign travel'. John Purver disputed the currency and accuracy of the research on which Letts had based his analysis, contending that PTA service was thorough and

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<sup>150</sup> Ibid, Report 'Prices for Inclusive Holidays with air travel: comparison with selected competitors in certain centres', January 1959.

<sup>151</sup> HAT50/1/140/1/6 Undated report on visit to Riccione, 33.

<sup>152</sup> HAT JWT/GD/142 JWT guardbook of Poly advertising, *Travel Topics* and *Travel World*, January 1958; January 1959.

reliable if slower than that of its rivals, and that the choice of countries and resorts was wider than most. He agreed that PTA holidays were dearer than others – in some cases, up to 10-15% dearer than those of air charter specialists. Perhaps most damningly, Purver speculated that the PTA's main market was in the C social class (skilled workers and lower professions), but 'Distressingly, we have only a rather vague idea' whether his speculation had a factual basis. If this was true, then arguably the agency was as culpable as the client in running marketing campaigns without properly defining its audience. An advertising and market research agency might have had a vested interest in finding, or magnifying, possible problems for the client. Nonetheless, the JWT correspondence hints at some of the problems a long-established firm might encounter in a changing marketplace.

### **Acquisition and beyond**

Little evidence is available regarding the firm's operations in its final few years before acquisition. There may have been some tension among the shareowners and directors, according to letters Neil Hogg wrote to his brother Quintin. Writing from the Hotel Bristol in Grindelwald, where it seems he was based at that time, Neil Hogg expressed a wish to release 'some part of the capital tied up in the Swiss properties', despite 'the most fantastic difficulties' caused by the late Ronald Studd's wills.<sup>153</sup> The wills to which he referred – both made in 1954 - were, indeed, complicated, dividing Poly Travel-related income and properties in various directions. A grant of 24 March 1956 in respect of Studd's will(s) was revoked on 5 January 1962, which suggests it may have been subject to appeal – not surprising if Neil Hogg and other Poly Travel shareholders were in dispute.<sup>154</sup>

Meanwhile, Harold Bamberg had acquired Sir Henry Lunn Ltd, but still needed 'someone to fill our aircraft'. Bamberg realised that Lunn's primarily rail and sea-based business would not fulfil his ambition 'to create a new type of holiday for the British public – low-cost holidays by air'. He approached Thomas Cook whose chairman, James Maxwell, declined an invitation to work more closely together.<sup>155</sup> However, Duncan Hawes, who Bamberg had appointed as Managing Director of Sir Henry Lunn Ltd in 1956, knew Sir Eric Studd:

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<sup>153</sup> CAC HLSM8/12/31 Letter from Neil Hogg to Lord Hailsham, 8 June 1958.

<sup>154</sup> Principal Probate Registry, Will of Commander RG Studd (d.1956). Unfortunately it has not been possible to identify Ethel Studd; no person of that name has been found within the known family records.

<sup>155</sup> *ABTA*, 33.

It emerged that Sir Eric wanted to sell, and we had people out all weekend evaluating Poly's branches to see what they were worth. Basically he was giving us the company if we would take on its debts, but it was a very proud organisation and would not sell off the shops one by one.<sup>156</sup>

Through Sir Henry Lunn Ltd, Bamberg acquired Poly Travel on 1 October 1962. Neil Hogg noted: 'Poly Travel died... of a surfeit of Studds.'<sup>157</sup> Bamberg and four other directors from Lunn joined the board of Poly Travel, which continued as a separate company under its own name until its trading activities were merged with those of Sir Henry Lunn Ltd on 1 November 1967.<sup>158</sup> Recalling the acquisition many years later, Bamberg commented:

Poly Travel had 19 branches and we wanted to expedite our national coverage for the purpose of marketing the package holiday... [by working with travel agents] you could buy the hotel accommodation and the airline fee at the point of sale in England... we [could] plan ahead and... allocate large numbers of seats on the airline and accommodation at the hotel.<sup>159</sup>

Bamberg kept Lunn and Poly Travel, along with Everyman Holidays and Charles Rickard Tours, within a group known as the Travel Trust, although branch offices were now known as 'Lunn-Poly' branches. While the 1967 *Poly Super-Jet Holidays* brochure bore the Poly name, very little else was recognisable from the PTA days. Spain, Italy and Majorca made up the majority of the holidays on offer, with Tunisia billed as a new destination; Switzerland merited two pages out of sixty. The full colour photographs focused firmly on beaches and bikinis. The brochure claimed that a £14 saving on one holiday could pay for, among other things, six bottles of sparkling wine or twenty glasses of beer; by the temperature chart; and by the promise of 'Fun in the Sun – the Poly way!'<sup>160</sup>

## Summary

The acquisition of Poly Travel by Bamberg marked a decisive break with the company's past: not merely its recent past in the relatively prosperous times of the

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<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

<sup>157</sup> CAC HLSM/8/17/7 Letter from Neil Hogg to Lord Hailsham, 'Strike Day', 1962; UWA/PTA/1/7, *Notification to the Registrar of Companies*, 1 October 1962.

<sup>158</sup> UWA/PTA/1/7, *Notification to the Registrar of Companies*, 30 September 1967 and 2 April 1968.

<sup>159</sup> Letter from Harold Bamberg to the author, 16 March 2011.

<sup>160</sup> UWA/PTA/2/1/40 *Poly Super-Jet Holidays 1967*, 3, 5, 30, 44-5.

late 1950s, but fifty years as a privately-owned firm with strong Polytechnic links through the Studds and Hoggs. While its private ownership and less intimate relationship with the Polytechnic mean that a complete history of the firm between 1911 and 1962 is not available, there is enough evidence from a variety of sources to give us substantial insight into the PTA's survival, its evolution and also points of continuity with its embryonic years within its parent institution. Times and leisure habits changed, but a PTA customer from the early twentieth century might not have found the post-1945 incarnation of the company, and its promotion of 'jolly houseparties', to be wholly unfamiliar. The PTA (latterly Poly Travel) retained its links with the Polytechnic, it adapted its holiday portfolio gradually and it survived the vicissitudes of economic uncertainty, the disruption of two world wars and the emergence of new technologies and new competitors. For these reasons, and on the balance of evidence, we may judge the company to have been a success story and a significant player in the British travel and tourism industry. However, the qualities which continued to make the PTA distinctive – its Poly links and its gradual evolution rather than rapid change – contribute to the conclusion that, while it adapted to modern developments in the travel and tourism industry after 1911, it did not shape the industry. If to be 'modern' was to be consciously new or innovative, the PTA was a contemporary rather than a 'modern' firm in its post-1911 incarnation.

## Chapter 7: Conclusion

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;  
Am an attendant lord, one that will do  
To swell a progress, start a scene or two...<sup>1</sup>

This investigation opened by suggesting that, because of the preponderance of research on Thomas Cook, the historiography of modern British travel and tourism might be described as ‘*Hamlet* without the supporting cast’. The previous chapters have sought to add to that historiography with an in-depth analysis of the history of the PTA. They have attempted to establish whether, and in what respects, the PTA was distinctive, successful and ‘modern’. The available evidence would seem to indicate that, while the PTA might not have been a second Hamlet upon the British travel and tourism stage, it played a more significant role than that of a Rosencrantz or a Guildenstern. The story of its emergence, growth and development is a prism through which it is possible to view a number of debates relating to concepts such as rational recreation, respectability, representations and modernity.

Although its links with its parent institution weakened in later years – especially after 1945 – the PTA’s origins owed much to those of the Polytechnic, and in turn the Polytechnic’s origins in London. The imperial metropole acted as a late nineteenth century magnet for many who moved from the country to the city and, in consequence, London expanded into suburbs from which thousands of lower middle class and working class people could commute into work. As increasing numbers of workers enjoyed more disposable income and leisure time, London became a departure point for greater numbers to travel on holiday within southern England and across the Channel. The capital also acted as a focus for at least some of the significant developments in sport and pastimes; and for charitable and philanthropic efforts, many of which involved the Church as it sought to consolidate its place in people’s daily lives. The Polytechnic’s birth, early sustenance and development were significantly influenced by these trends and by its three principal figures: Quintin Hogg, whose father chaired the East India Company and who travelled regularly, partly to fulfil business commitments in another outpost of Empire; JEK Studd, who had made his name as a sportsman and trained as a missionary; and

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<sup>1</sup> TS Eliot, ‘The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock’, from *The Waste Land and other poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1990), 8.

Robert Mitchell, whose more humble social background separated him from Hogg and Studd but, perhaps, brought him closer to the natural viewpoint of most Polytechnic members and students. These three men provided the vision, the finance, the energy and the management skills to develop the Polytechnic into what came to be seen as the prototype for the solution – or at least part of the solution – to Britain’s perceived lack of economic and industrial competitiveness against rising rivals. For Polytechnic members and students, the world could offer an array of opportunities to better themselves, in a permanent sense through emigration or by advancing their education through travel. The latter impulse manifested itself in the organised trips to Switzerland in 1888 and to Paris in 1889. Those who could not travel abroad could still enjoy a holiday in a Polytechnic setting at UK holiday homes, which became a focus for philanthropy through the Holiday-by-Proxy Fund. The Polytechnic and its embryonic travel agency were not unique, but the circumstances of their origins and the scale of their ambitions distinguished them from other organisations emerging at around the same time. Across London in the East End, the Toynbee Travellers’ Club got off to a successful start in the late 1880s, but it remained a self-contained section of the organisation. It did not operate on as large a scale as the Polytechnic tours, perhaps because Samuel Barnett’s vision did not incorporate the possibilities of travel in the same way as that of Hogg, perhaps because no Toynbee equivalent of Mitchell existed to plan large-scale excursions. The travel firms created by John Frame and Henry Lunn were essentially examples of individual entrepreneurship without the framework of a parent institution – although Lunn’s work at the Polytechnic might have helped him to gain early experience of the travel industry. The CHA rose out of a critique of working-class and lower middle-class leisure in the north-west of England. Its early, locally-based holidays with their ascetic tone were intended at least in part as an antidote to the perceived negative effects of some aspects of industrialisation and urbanisation. As the early Polytechnic tours were a product of their time and place, so were the CHA’s holidays. Nonetheless, the Polytechnic’s tours, the Toynbee Travellers’ Club and the other travel agencies who emerged to follow in the footsteps of Thomas Cook can be seen as aspects of the broader ‘rational recreation’ movement.

The growth of the Polytechnic and its tours brought not only success, but also strains and tensions. In a promotional and ideological sense, the embryonic PTA attempted from its early days to represent itself as a pioneering body like its parent, but the continental tour programme, with Switzerland, Norway and north-western

Europe accounting for most of it, visited destinations already well-known to British travellers (albeit not necessarily to the lower middle classes). The UK holiday homes grew from an initial geographical base in the south and east of England, an entirely predictable and sensible development bearing in mind the Polytechnic's London location. The institution's changed status from 1891 left it relying to some extent on external funding and its governing body included external representation, diluting the power of the existing oligarchy of Hogg, Studd and Mitchell. That governing body agreed to the separation of the tour accounts from the Polytechnic accounts, a significant step on the road to the PTA's eventual privately-owned status. It did not wish to risk the Polytechnic's finances in order to generate profits from the tours, as Hogg had done (gambling, ironically, with his own money on behalf of the institution he founded, whose regulations forbade gambling).<sup>2</sup> The growth of the tours required not only the support and planning of the Polytechnic's senior leaders, but a significant number of other staff who led tours, lectured on them and promoted them to external audiences, as well as a network of agents around the country. This and the high profile of the tours within the inhouse magazine were met with a growing vein of criticism, sometimes in the magazine itself and at other times in the new Institute Council. The criticisms focused on various concerns and perceptions: that the tours were too expensive for some members; that non-members might be going at the expense of members; that those who went on the more expensive tours were not the core constituency of the institution; and that the touring operations detracted from other Polytechnic work. The senior leadership paid attention to some of this feedback, for example by ensuring the inclusion of cheaper UK holidays and by reserving places at the Jersey holiday home for members. However, no specific critique gained enough momentum to prevent the tours from expanding further; and the portfolio continued to include tours for those with relatively large amounts of disposable income and spare time.

The continuing success of the tours owed much to a healthy dose of pragmatism. Early emphasis on their 'co-operative and educational' nature gave way to a more rounded ideological range consistent with the Polytechnic's self-image and with attracting a substantial number of customers. 'Rational' and 'respectable' elements were prominent, with promotional materials emphasising that tours would run under Poly rules on land and at sea. Even the financial loss resulting from the removal of the drinking saloon and gambling from Polytechnic cruise ships was

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<sup>2</sup> UWA/RSP/P53 *Rules of the Institute 1891*, 12.

justifiable in order to defend respectability. Privacy, the exclusive use of sporting facilities and a healthy environment were all part of the package, as were the advantages of sociability and good fellowship, record-breaking, sporting prowess and – again reproducing a central part of the Polytechnic’s identity – the spirit of pioneering. On the other hand, while Hogg used one tour reunion to stress the importance of tours in reinforcing religious belief, this theme found relatively few echoes in promotional materials or in reunion reports. Nor did any sense of a wider political perspective become a significant element of the way the Polytechnic promoted its tours, in contrast to other organisations, notably the CHA and the Toynbee Workmen’s Travelling Club. The Polytechnic marketed the tours, in other words, as appealing to a broad middle-class church, as represented by its members and students, rather than a narrow sect. This conclusion is reinforced by the analysis of its pricing of the tours which, while not necessarily cheaper than the tours run by competitors, was keenly competitive. The Polytechnic may well have been in the vanguard of opening up foreign holidays for a wider audience than before, even if it was not the leader and pioneer it claimed to be – not, at any rate, in the sphere of travel and tourism. However, a number of longer and more expensive tours remained in the portfolio, perhaps again in acknowledgement that the Polytechnic’s internal and external target markets encompassed a large income range. An examination of the numbers of Polytechnic tourists, and the accounts, indicates that the pragmatism running through planning, promotion and pricing was justified. Tourist numbers more than doubled from 5,314 to 11,394 between 1895 and 1904. The continental and general tours, in particular those to Switzerland, were key to generating operating profits, which were allocated towards investment in tour properties such as Lucerne, and donations to Polytechnic funds, which reached £3,000 in most years for which records survive up to 1911. The Polytechnic as a whole and most of its other constituent parts were regularly in financial deficit, rendering the touring ‘donations’ all the more important – another point of contrast with Toynbee tours, which remained self-financing.

The distinctive nature of the Polytechnic (and early PTA) tours is reinforced, as is the unstable and protean nature of meanings of modernity, when we consider accounts of those tours published up to 1911 in comparison with Toynbee and CHA travel accounts. While northern and western continental Europe predominated in the writings of all three organisations, the CHA’s travel accounts were in one sense the ‘odd man out’, as the holidays themselves had a rural focus, while both Polytechnic



and Toynbee parties visited cities as well, for cultural and educational purposes. The Polytechnic authors, as far as we can tell, were almost all male – not necessarily a surprise, given the institution’s origins as a young man’s institute, but a contrast to CHA and Toynbee travel writings in which female contributors featured regularly. Polytechnic accounts of their parties’ travels contained a large dose of the ‘sentimental’ strain of anti-conquest travel writing.<sup>3</sup> Tourists were not merely observers, but the heroes of their own narratives, bonding together on the outward journey with games and singing and noting the reactions of the local populace to their arrival. Reports of interactions with the prominent citizens of Bergen, the Prince of Naples and (indirectly) the German Emperor demonstrated a taste for mixing with higher social classes than those from which most Polytechnic tourists originated – in Cannadine’s ornamentalist terms, an example of the British being concerned ‘with rank rather than with race’.<sup>4</sup>

Polytechnic writers emphasised the significance of the tours, both on their own terms and by the citing of specific incidents and achievements, as reinforcing the collective ego of the institution itself with its record-breaking, pioneering qualities. Summaries of the joys of walking through the natural wonders of Switzerland and Norway had more than a touch of the sublime about them and also echoed late eighteenth-century anti-conquest travel writing in mostly leaving natives out of the picture. When they gave attention to the characteristics of the local populaces of the places they visited, Polytechnic tour accounts placed foreigners in a pre-modern (and, in the case of the French, a rather negative) light. On tours of Scotland and Ireland, two of Britain’s internal ‘Others’, Polytechnic writers showed little interest in the locals save, perhaps, for confirming their existing preconceptions about the poverty of the Irish. As far as a typical Polytechnic travel author was concerned, in spite of all temptations to give praise to other nations, he remained an Englishman - with a distinctly superior attitude to other races, although prepared in some cases such as the Swiss and the Norwegians to offer qualified praise. This contrasted significantly both with Toynbee and CHA writers, who took care to laud qualities of cleanliness, prosperity, courtesy and kindness in foreign peoples. The CHA’s determinedly internationalist outlook, coming as it did in a period in which Britain was gradually drawn into closer diplomatic co-operation with other powers, could be seen as an alternative performance of modernity to the Polytechnic flavour.

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<sup>3</sup> Pratt, *Imperial eyes*, 78-82.

<sup>4</sup> Cannadine, *Ornamentalism*, 123.

Polytechnic travel accounts exhibited overall what we may identify as a ‘style of thought’ reminiscent of, but not too closely aligned to, Said’s *Orientalism*: a ‘collective Continentalism’.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps the most distinctive, and the most ‘modern’, quality of Polytechnic tours as depicted in their travel writing was a sheer capacity for enjoyment, in a somewhat introspective sense. The tour parties showed little interest in the local peoples: they were too busy fishing, swimming, walking, climbing, playing sports, teasing local policemen and each other and getting into scrapes. While this behaviour was not disreputable or ‘unrespectable’, it was some way from what we might expect from ‘rational’ holidaymakers in an era in which holidays still had, notionally at least, serious purposes. Such behaviour may reflect Huggins and Mangan’s theories of appropriate lifecycles of disreputability, given the preponderance of young men in the Polytechnic community.<sup>6</sup> To be sure, the travel accounts carefully noted the important architectural and historical sights, duly ticking them off as cultural capital accumulated, preserving the impression of tours which improved those who went on them. The observation by Wilfred Bryant, who travelled with a Polytechnic tour but was not part of a Polytechnic party, of the absence of overt religious devotion is suggestive. Clearly there is a limit to which historians can see into the hearts and minds of late Victorian and Edwardian men and discern the extent of their religious faith; and the materials on which this analysis is based were almost all of a mediated nature, being articles in an inhouse magazine. Even so, Bryant’s comments, and the relative absence of religiously related matter in Polytechnic travel accounts, suggest that churchgoing and cathedral visiting might have been the ‘done thing’ rather than evidence of the religious devotion for which Hogg might have hoped.

The post-1911 period, in which the PTA operated as a privately-owned company, presents its own challenges for historians, with a degree of separation from the Polytechnic meaning that key business documentation no longer exists. Nonetheless, the surviving sources enable us to discern a fascinating era in which the PTA adapted enough to survive and become a major industry player without wholly losing its distinctive characteristics. There was no shortage of challenges and change for it to face: the disruption of two world wars and economic uncertainties (albeit a gradually upwards curve of consumer prosperity manifest in greater disposable income and more leisure time); leisure and transport developments such as the rise of

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<sup>5</sup> Said, *Orientalism*, 2.

<sup>6</sup> Huggins and Mangan (eds.), *Disreputable Pleasures*, ix-xx.

the motorcar and new mass media, along with the holiday camp and air travel; and the emergence of waves of competitors, some in the interwar era building on the work of pre-1914 agencies and others from the ability of holiday camp and aviation entrepreneurs to spot new market opportunities. Against this background, the PTA retained its Polytechnic links in terms of its ownership, its location (until 1950) and its donations to the parent institution. Between the wars and, to a greater extent, after 1945, the company celebrated its history and even attempted to incorporate its origins into its marketing, at least until the change of name to Poly Travel in 1958. The emphasis on 'comfort and economy in travel' between the wars, along with the concerns in the 1950s about its prices in relation to competitors, indicated that the PTA continued to aim for the same broad middle-class and lower middle-class market which had fuelled its original success and growth. It adapted its portfolio after 1918 to reflect the growing demand for motor tours and even essayed escorted air tours to Switzerland. The educational and religious themes which were present in its late Victorian adolescence faded and promotional materials emphasised the potential of holidays for beneficial personal change and development, rather than as the cultural reset switch which 'rational recreation' implied. The success of the PTA's strategies of adaptation is apparent from the number of bookings it generated by the 1950s and its advertising spend, relative to competitors, as well as indirect evidence of its industry status. Harold Bamberg's acquisition of Poly Travel, as it then was, testifies to the value of the brand and its national reach. However, the success of the PTA in adaptation after 1911 was not matched by significant innovation. Ronald Studd, who led the firm for over thirty years during this period, retained Switzerland's central place in the company's portfolio, while attempting from time to time to copy the innovations of others, such as George Lunn's interwar motor tours or the growing popularity of camping holidays after 1945. The prominence of 'jolly houseparties' in the 1947 UK holidays brochure, the slowness of the rise of southern European holidays in its overseas brochures and indirect criticisms from the PTA's agents and its advertising and research agency all suggest that the PTA was hoping to preserve its hard-earned position, rather than to shape the industry by developing new locations or new types of holidays.

So how distinctive was the PTA; how 'modern'; and how successful? Given the nature of much of the available evidence, answers to those questions are far from simple. In its early years, it was certainly not unique among travel organisations in possessing some of the characteristics and drivers of the wider rational recreation

movement. We should beware, also, of too easily accepting the PTA's self-estimate as a pioneer (an extreme form of modernity), which owed more to a wish to emulate the Polytechnic's genuine pioneering status than to reality. Nonetheless, it attracted a substantial clientele from within emerging sections of the middle classes and – almost by accident – created a distinctive portfolio, focusing primarily on Switzerland, which changed little in terms of the balance of destinations until the 1950s. As we have seen, Polytechnic travel writing exhibited a distinctive ideology, 'collective Continentalism', which set it apart from accounts of those who travelled with other organisations.

The PTA was certainly not a pioneering institution, especially not in its post-1911 incarnation, latterly as Poly Travel. It did not originate 'mass travel', new destinations, new methods of travel or new pricing or marketing techniques. Nevertheless, by making a series of incremental adaptations, it survived two world wars and their aftermaths, an economic depression and vigorous competition to operate for almost 75 years in all and over fifty years in private ownership, becoming a substantial and respected firm, and its 'Poly' brand label survived for several years beyond its acquisition in 1962. The PTA deserves to be assessed as more than a footnote in the history of educational travel. It was a significant contributor to the story of modern British travel and tourism and, at various points and in several respects, it was a distinctive, modern and successful organisation.

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