

TopFoto

THE IMAGERY OF
NEARLY EVERYTHING



BY

WWW.TOPFOTO.CO.UK





This article first appeared in Montage, the magazine of the Picture Research Association and has now been updated.
www.picture-research.org.uk



for specialist libraries and archives. Many have given up, or have disappeared into mega-agencies. Even when the specialist agencies have invested in their own websites it is not always possible for busy researchers to access several sites to find the picture they want.

the Egyptian authorities to remove the glass cases from the Tutankhamun treasures before photographing them.

ArenaPal Images, an unrivalled collection covering all aspects of the

'The Imagery of Nearly Everything'

It's quite a claim. But after thirty three years of rescuing, preserving and indexing archives of global importance, sixteen years of computer indexing, ten years of scanning these irreplaceable images and seven years of merging these and many fascinating and specialist collections on to one major website, with two million pictures already on line, it is a claim that can be supported, particularly since 300,000 pictures, captioned in English, from the incomparable treasure troves of **Roger-Viollet**, Paris; **Alinari**, Florence and **ullsteinbild**, Berlin have been added to the site.

The sudden advent of new – and expensive – technologies, shrinking picture research departments and ever more intensive pressure on picture researchers have been making life difficult

TopFoto aims to provide a market place for the specialist and general agencies to remain independent and yet to compete on equal terms, while researchers can access a one-stop shop where they can find and licence just exactly what they want.

Extensive files from the UK's; **The Ancient Art and Architecture Collection, Fotomas Index UK, Heritage Image Partnership, The Punch Cartoon Library, the Werner Forman Archive, Woodmansterne**, and the **World History Archive** place TopFoto firmly among the premier sources for cultural heritage. To these are added the files of the famous publisher George **Rainbird**, for whom many of today's picture researchers worked. Rainbird shrewdly pioneered the printed integration in book form of colour and black and white pictures. His most famous coup, however, was persuading

TOP ROW
LEFT TO RIGHT

David Hockney
John Hedgecoe

US President George W. Bush shakes hands with Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger 2003
Lynne Fernandes / The Image Works

Gargoyles on Melrose Abbey, Scotland
Derek Mitchell / Scotland in Focus

INSIDE COVER

Cadets of HMS Worcester at rowing practice off Greenhithe Kent.
10 July 1951
John Topham

BOTTOM ROW
LEFT TO RIGHT

Soldiers mobilised at Gare L'est, Paris.
25 August 1939
Roger-Viollet

'Me + cat'. Two superimposed photos of Wanda Wulz and of her cat, 1932
History of Photography-Zannier Collection, Alinari

People in West Berlin look over the wall to East Berlin during its construction.
August 1961
ullstein bild

All these pictures and more are available at www.TopFoto.co.uk





performing arts, is one of the unique specialist agencies hosted at TopFoto.

The **Charles Walker Collection** and the **Fortean Picture Library**, both searchable at TopFoto, form the world's premier archives of man, myth and magic.

Crime and the Law in the UK are comprehensively covered by **Photonews**, based at the Court of Old Bailey in London. **Professional Sport** specialises in award winning sports photography. **UNEP** (United Nations Environment



Programme) shows staggering images of the world's beauty but also massive environmental abuse and destruction. **Visual & Written**, Spain specialise in the rich colours of underwater photography

The vibrant new Scotland and its matchless landscape and history can be found at **Scotland in Focus** and **The Business AM Library**. **National Pictures** provides a stream of pictures for the national press, **UPPA** has some 3.5 million pictures especially useful for personalities, including early pop and film stars. The archives of **The Observer Colour** magazine are an important source of rare colour for the look of the 1960s and 1970s.

From the USA, **The Image Works** is the premier independent stock photo agency for all aspects of America. Washington DC based, **Photri** has a comprehensive collection specialising in space, aerospace, war and the American armed forces, while **ClassicStock** offers rare model released material from the 1950s and 60s. Denmark is covered by **Polfoto**, part of the largest Danish media-group, Turkey and the new-Europe is been photographed by **Seskim Photo**. East Germany is revealed in the GDR archive



of **Culture-Images**, Gemany and for Russia and the former Soviet Union, from historical beginnings to the present day, where better than **RIA Novosti**.

World travel destinations in stunning colour and quality are offered by the **AA World Travel Library**, **PhotoNewZealand**, **Dinodia**, India, **Caro**, Germany and a number of professional photographers all over the globe. Closer to home, UK cities are being taken in high quality digital format by **UK City Images**.

Topham Picturepoint, the parent company of TopFoto, has six million pictures dating from medieval manuscripts to today's digital files and can meet many difficult picture requests. It was founded in 1975, when Alan and Joanna Smith bought the Topham archive of 120,000 pictures. The photographer **John Topham** was working as a policeman in the East End of London when he sold a picture to the Daily Mirror for 5 guineas – a fortnight's wage! – and decided to become a professional. He devoted the rest of his life to photographing daily life in the countryside and suburbs of south-east England. His most famous picture is of hop-pickers' children sheltering in a trench in 1940, while the Battle of Britain

TOP ROW LEFT TO RIGHT	BOTTOM ROW LEFT TO RIGHT
London Underground and Big Ben at night. <i>UK City Images</i>	Children of hop pickers watch the Battle of Britain rage overhead, Kent 1940. <i>John Topham</i>
The gun used by Nebojsa Denic in the Graff Jewellers robbery of 2003. <i>Lindsey Parnaby / Photonews</i>	Jahangir bestrides The Globe and embraces Shah Abbas of Persia 1620 <i>Rainbird</i>
Chelsea wall in the Champions League 2005 <i>Tommy Hindley / ProSport</i>	Michael Jackson in concert at Wembley Stadium, 1997 <i>UPPA</i>

All these pictures and more are available at www.TopFoto.co.uk





traged overhead. This picture flashed around the world and when published in Life Magazine was widely credited with changing American attitudes and helping to bring the USA into the war.

The new owners were trained as historians, not photographers, and used their new resource to write books around the pictures. An early work, *Memory Lane*, a record of the way we were, became a best seller, much used by set designers at the BBC. Other books were *We'll Meet Again*, *Edwardian Children*, *The Day Before Yesterday*, *Yesterday*, *Those Were The Days*, *Village Cooking*, *Farm Your Garden* and the 1979 winner of the André Simon prize for the best wine book of the year, *The New English Vineyard*. Perhaps because of their historical interest, the Smiths were agonised by the destruction of so much of the photographic heritage. It was a time when nobody wanted pictures, when Francis Frith negatives were used for cloches in the factory garden and when the sound of breaking plate glass negatives could be heard at night in Fleet Street. There was ample storage space at the Smiths' Victorian vicarage in rural Kent, where a rescue collection seemed to arrive every month. At one time there were a hundred



filing cabinets under canvas on the lawn, whilst the contents were sorted.

First to arrive was most of the library that had been built around **Illustrated Magazine**, started in 1936 by Staffan Lorant before he started *Picture Post*, and numerous women's magazines.

The next huge arrival was the **UPI** (London) negative collection. U stood for **Universal**, P for **Planet News** and I for **International News Photos**. The span was 1932 to 1970. *Planet News* is particularly interesting for its coverage of 1930's Soviet trials, the Spanish Civil War, the USA and England's social life.

By 1980 the collection numbered many millions, but the incoming tide was unstoppable. Other arrivals included a large part of the **Press Association** negative library 1945-1960, outstanding for its record of daily life. The Library has continued a long relationship with both the Press Association and **Associated Press**.

Next came the early negatives of **Pictorial Press**, started by Tom Blau before he founded *Camera Press*. It contains outstanding photography, including work by **Ken Russell** and other young meteors,



and the subject matter is of great interest covering everything from world famous musicians, composers, conductors and ballet stars to Russell's brilliant reportage on Teddy boys and girls from the 1950s.

The last of the really big analogue collections to arrive was **Picturepoint** in 1994. *Picturepoint* was, and is, one of the big players in travel and topography.

Topham early embraced new technologies – it was the first UK picture library to

TOP ROW
LEFT TO RIGHT

Beatles fans 1964
UPI

"Winter Dreams"
Royal Ballet, 1996
Irek Mukhamedov / Darcey Bussell
Clive Barda / ArenaPAL

A B-1B from the 127th
Bomb Wing, Kansas Air
National Guard, breaks
the sound barrier at the
Pensacola Beach airshow
Gregg Stansbery / Photri

BOTTOM ROW
LEFT TO RIGHT

Loch Ness Monster,
Scotland, photographed
by Anthony Shiels from
Urquhart Castle, Scotland
21st May 1977
Fortean Picture Library

American Alligator, Florida.
Prisma / Visual & Written

The Loans Office
HA Roberts / ClassicStock

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more are available at
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use a fax – and it was one of the first to realise that computer cataloguing meant that collections could be accessed at a single point of reference, which avoided the necessity of integrating files physically. It sounds so obvious now, but it was not widely grasped sixteen years ago. Work started in earnest in 1992 and there are eight million records on the Topham database today.

Topham added to its already huge files sets of the classic illustrated magazines, **Illustrated London News** (the first hundred years is now indexed), **L'illustration, Punch, Life, Assiette au Beurre, Signal**, etc., etc. Online demand was voracious but digitisation of the images progressed steadily and slowly. The answer to the machine has been provided by the machine. Topham's core digital picture base is now part of TopFoto.

co.uk, which is now the home to many firms who use the site to host their own websites for the convenience of their own customers and whose collections are also seamlessly integrated with a site of two million pictures.

Like an angler, Alan Smith still mourns the big ones that got away. But perhaps it is just as well that Topham failed to acquire the BBC Hulton Picture Library and the two gigantic Express Group libraries. Its bid, if accepted, would have necessitated the removal of 300 filing cabinets within 24 hours before the Evening Standard building was knocked down.

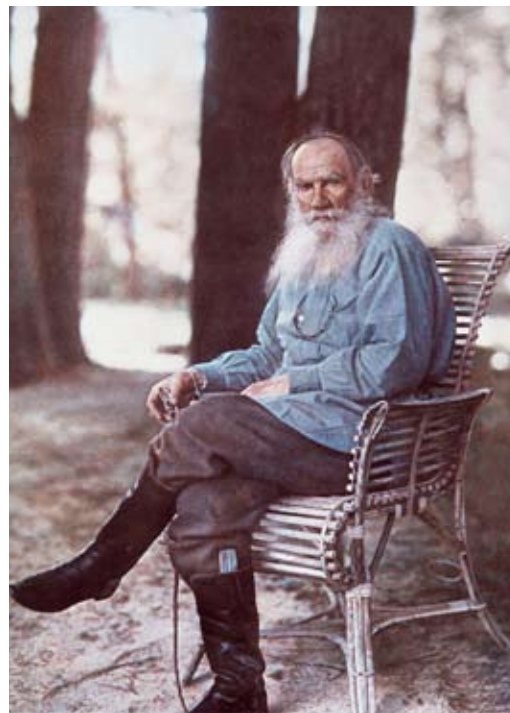
Today the problems are not so much photography as technology – how to beat the dreaded vinegar syndrome which is destroying 1945+ negatives which were previously thought safe from decay, how



to work with many production agencies receiving their pictures on a 24 hour basis, to provide 24 hour access both to agents throughout the world and to publishers in the UK, and to provide opportunity for TopFoto's skilled staff to research creatively whilst providing a scan-on-demand service for customers.

A major part of the collection has recently been moved to a substantial building in Edenbridge, Kent, whilst conservation scanning is done at other sites, linked by broadband. The Edenbridge site is also linked to over forty overseas agents and pictures move continuously around the world.

Tom Blau told the newly formed Topham library that the reason he had such good photographers at Camera Press was that they knew that somebody, somewhere, every minute of the day, was selling their pictures. And, for the libraries they represent, that is true of TopFoto.co.uk today.



TOP ROW
LEFT TO RIGHT

Harmonica Macrocosmica,
1660
The British Library / HIP

Twiggy, 1968
Observer Colour Magazine

All these pictures and more are available at www.TopFoto.co.uk

01732 863939
requests@topfoto.co.uk

BOTTOM ROW
LEFT TO RIGHT

Front Cover of Punch with James Callaghan's last stand to Socialism, illustrated by Trog (Walter 'Wally' Fawkes) 29 September 1976
Punch Cartoon Library

Lev Tolstoy in Yasnaya Polyana. 23 May 1908. A very early example of colour photography in Russia by Yevgeny Kassin
RIA Novosti

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TOP ROW
LEFT TO RIGHT

The Duomo in Florence, Italy
Ken Paterson / AA World Travel Library

Reflection of Mitre Peak in pool with green algae growing on rocks
Mark Orbell / Photo New Zealand

RIGHT

Teddy Girls 1955
Ken Russell

BOTTOM

Tomb of Mary Queen of Scots, Westminster Abbey
Woodmansterne



TOPFOTO INCLUDES PICTURES FROM:

- AA World Travel Library
- Alfieri (1914-1939)
- Alinari - Italy
- Ancient Art & Architecture
- Ann Ronan Picture Library
- ArenaPAL
- Associated Press
- Business AM Picture Library
- Caro - Germany
- Central News (1890-1930)
- Charles Walker Collection
- ClassicStock - USA
- Culture Images - Germany
- Dinodia Picture Library - India
- Firepix
- Fortean Picture Library
- Fotomas Index UK
- Heritage Image Partnership
- The Image Works - USA
- INP (1945-1955)
- John Hedgecoe
- John Topham (1927-1968)
- Keystone - Germany
- KPA - Germany
- National Pictures
- Odhams Periodicals (-1969)
- Photo New Zealand
- Photonews
- Photri - USA
- Planet News - (1928-1970)
- Pictorial Press - (1938-1960)
- Picturepoint
- Polfoto - Denmark
- Press Association
- Professional Sport
- Punch Cartoon Library
- Rainbird
- RIA Novosti - Russia
- Roger-Viollet - France
- Scotland in Focus
- Seskim Photo - Turkey
- Topham
- UK City Images
- ullstein bild - Germany
- UNEP (1991-1995)
- UPI - (1932-1970)
- UPPA
- Visual & Written - Spain
- Werner Forman
- Woodmansterne
- World History Archive



AA WORLD DIGITAL LIBRARY



ALINARI



The Resident Art & Architecture Collection



ARENA PAL



caro

The Charles Walker Collection

culture-images

FirePix

Fortean Picture Library

Heritage-images



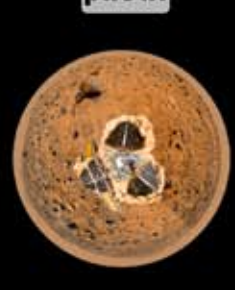
The Image Works USA

National Pictures

PHOTONEWS

photo newzealand

photri

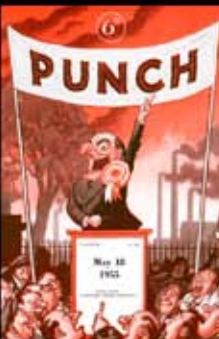


POLFOTO

Professional SPORT

Rainbird Revived

RIA Novosti



POWER SLIP



city photos

Topham Picturepoint

UK city images

ullstein bild



UNIVERSAL HISTORICAL IMAGES & VISUALS

Visual & Written

Werner Forman Archive

Woodmansterne

WHA

