
HASSALL

To Dulcie, who is a
great illustrator too.

First published by Unicorn
an imprint of Unicorn Publishing Group LLP, 2021
5 Newburgh Street
London W1F 7RG
www.unicornpublishing.org

ISBN 978-1-913491-23-9
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Designed by Felicity Price-Smith
Printed in Europe by Finetone Ltd

Front endpaper: Henley, colour lithographic print published by Henry Graves & Co. Ltd, of Pall Mall in 1901. Hassall's crisp outlines and gorgeous ice-cream colour palette brings order to the inevitable chaos of this annual boating festival on the River Thames, traditionally a highlight of the summer Season.

Back endpaper: Fun in the Christmas Holidays: A Children's Fancy Dress Ball, published in the *Graphic*, Christmas Number, 28 November 1901. A child at heart, and a lifelong fancy dress enthusiast, Hassall must have enjoyed working on this picture. Look closely at the back of the picture and Hassall has drawn himself, together with Cecil Aldin and Dudley Hardy.

Overleaf: John Hassall by silhouette artist and fellow London Sketch Club member, Harry Lawrence Oakley, 1926.

LUCINDA GOSLING

JOHN HASSALL

THE LIFE AND ART OF THE POSTER KING

UNICORN

JOHN HASSALL
1868 – 1948

CONTENTS

FOREWORD BY MIKE LEIGH

There's a famous seaside town
  called Blackpool,
That's noted for fresh air and fun,
And Mr and Mrs Ramsbottom
Went there with Albert, their son.

So begins the fateful saga of what happened to the lad when he poked his 'stick with an 'orse's 'ead 'andle' in the ear of Wallace the lion at Blackpool Tower Zoo. This comic verse is from *Albert, 'Arold And Others*, one of three volumes by the music hall comedian and legendary pantomime dame, Marriott Edgar.

Edgar's verses were intended as monologues, to be delivered in a broad Lancashire accent. Several were made popular on disc by Stanley Holloway. For many of us post-war kids in the North-West, one of our cultural privileges was to hear them performed frequently by enthusiastic grown-ups. The headmaster of my Salford primary school, a very tall man called Mr Small, was regularly given to lusty renderings, his particular party piece being 'Runcorn Ferry', with its famous refrain, 'Tuppence per person per trip'.

These books were of course right up my street, the verses rooted, so it seemed, in the real salt-and-grime world I lived in, even when telling historical tales, like the signing of the Magna Carta …

So they spread Charter out
  on t' tea table,
And John signed his name
  like a lamb.
His writing in places
  was sticky and thick
Through dipping his pen
  in the jam.

And then there were the glorious drawings. 'With 46 character illustrations by John Hassall', announced the front cover. And characterful they certainly are. From Albert and his parents wading

cheerfully into the Mersey to avoid paying for the ferry, to William of Normandy conferring amiably with his men at the Battle of Hastings, and young Albert infuriating his ancient grumpy grandma by enquiring, as she'd been at Queen Victoria's Jubilee, 'how she'd got on in the flood', Hassall's gallery bursts with his warmth and humanity, his comic vision and his accurate observation. I loved them, and they were unquestionably an early influence on my notions about depicting people.

In one of the many second-hand bookshops on Charing Cross Road, I was for years charmed and intrigued by a large framed painting which, an assistant said, depicted the Peasants' Revolt of 1381. Hundreds of men advance towards us, shoulder to shoulder, some armed with swords. Detailed, individual portrayals, all painted with compassion, humour and a gritty reality.

Eventually, I asked if it was for sale. Emphatically not, I was told. There was no way the shop owner would ever part with it. Then one day the assistant announced that they were closing down, and that I could buy the enigmatic picture if I wished. So I did.

Now I could examine it closely. Suddenly, there it was – the magic moniker, discreetly inscribed in the corner: 'Hassall'. Of course! – I should have recognised the master's style! But I knew only of his posters and illustrations, and I didn't make the connection. We already had on our walls a few of his pantomime posters, so it was great that *The Peasants' Revolt* had now joined its fellow Hassalls.

Except that it isn't *The Peasants' Revolt* at all. After owning it for twenty-five years, I was recently contacted by the author of this book, who had heard that I was a Hassall fan. Having only seen a black and white photo of the painting, Lucinda was excited to learn of its survival, but informed me that it is in fact called *The Raiders*, and depicts raiders (or 'reivers') on the Scottish border. And now I look at it, I can see that, of course – that's exactly who they are!

This impressive book is important, not only as a reminder and a celebration of a great English artist, but because, in this age of instant digital imagery, poster art is continually under threat.

In my endless battles over poster design (mostly with film distributors, rather than theatre managements), I plead not only for simple, bold images, but for the involvement of original artists and illustrators, instead of the unimaginative turgid recycling of production stills which make all posters look alike. I invoke names like Toulouse-Lautrec, Abram Games, Ronald Searle, Saul Steinberg, Robert Crumb – and, of course, John Hassall.

I wish Hassall was still around. I'd have loved to see his poster for *Abigail's Party*.

ML

Hassall's poster for *Little Red Riding Hood* is a sophisticated take on the fairy tale, with heavy Art Nouveau influences. The poppies dominating the foreground were a potent symbol of opium and sin, while the wolf, lingering in the background, is a malevolent presence. It was reproduced as a full page in colour in the *Poster*, December 1898.

INTRODUCTION

THE POOR MAN'S PICTURE GALLERY

In November 1928, a celebratory dinner was held at Stationers' Hall by the British Poster Advertising Association to celebrate one hundred years of poster advertising. The guest of honour, the Duke of York, the future George VI, gave a speech in which he summed up the contribution the poster made to public life.

> The hoarding, with its posters, has been aptly called on more than one occasion, 'The Poor Man's Picture Gallery'. It is a gallery which is open day and night, all year round, and there is no charge for admission.

In the early part of the twentieth century the advertising hoardings in Britain acted as a two-dimensional market stall to tempt consumers and, inadvertently, as a platform for aesthetic gratification. The main purpose of a poster may have been to seduce the public into spending their hard-earned shillings, whether on laundry soap, cigarettes, baking powder or seats at the theatre, but it was also responsible for the subliminal delivery of art and good design to thousands of people on a daily basis, some of whom might never have dreamt of setting foot inside an actual art gallery. Yet, advertising posters had not always been held in such high regard.

The poster of the mid-nineteenth century, such as it was, was widely considered a blight on Britain's towns and cities. It would be a number of years before such a thing as a pictorial poster emerged, and until then little consideration was given to artistic design. Most consisted entirely of letterpress, with as much information as possible packed on to each one in fonts of varying sizes. They were essentially inflated versions of handbills, and on the rare occasions they carried pictures (most frequently on coaching timetables),

Opposite:
Hoardings in a London street in 1907, with posters by John Hassall for the Irish International Exhibition, Dublin and Allsopp's Lager clearly visible.

John Orlando Parry's extraordinary view of a London street scene in 1835, with a billposter busily at work, was painted for his wife and included references to both of them among the letterpress posters (he was an actor and singer, as well as a talented artist). The picture is an excellent example of the much-criticised chaotic appearance of hoardings in Victorian London.

these were usually in the form of crude woodcuts. Before posters used art and design to tempt passers-by, the responsibility for ensuring the public took notice of them lay with those in charge of their distribution – the billstickers. Billstickers, or billposters, were a familiar sight on the streets of towns and cities. Armed with rolls of posters, brushes and pots of paste, their job was to plaster any available outdoor space – walls, fences, the sides of buildings or specially-erected hoardings – with advertising bills. The main objective was domination, usually achieved by eclipsing any rival posters with sheer volume; the fact that billstickers would regularly paste their posters over those of a rival only added to the chaotic appearance of the maligned hoardings. At one point it was estimated that there were 150 billstickers working in London alone, each with the capacity to post up to one hundred posters a day. This escalating activity was rapidly turning the city into one, huge decoupage experiment. 'For year after year have the eyes of the public been outraged by the unsightly hoardings that occupy the finest site in the whole of the metropolis, for the special benefits, it would seem, of the bill-stickers,' wrote an indignant *Illustrated London News* in 1844 of the posters ruining the appearance of Trafalgar Square.

Billstickers, as the frontline perpetrators, suffered the most criticism for this plague of posters, and in 1861 a trade association, the United Kingdom Billposters' Association, was formed, bringing some respectability and regulation to the industry. In the 1880s it would merge with a rival organisation to form the United Billposters' Association and publish its own trade publication, the *Bill Poster*. In order to avoid the haphazard jumble of posters in one place, companies began to pay for advertising space. With a pitch exclusively reserved, there was no danger that their posters would be pasted over and advertisers began to see the benefit of investing in a more aesthetic approach. This development coincided with advances in the printing technique of lithography, enabling the production of more colourful, artistic designs. More generally, there was a boom in consumerism during the nineteenth century, with a growing middle class the target for myriad products being churned out of factories and businesses around the country. It was this combination of factors that provided the ideal conditions for a new kind of poster to flourish.

In 1869, two posters drawn by Godefroy Durand heralded the launch of *The Graphic*. The illustrated weekly journal set out to publish the best examples of illustration (Van Gogh would come to admire this publication) and its posters ushered its highly artistic entrance on to the news-stand. However, a design made by Frederick Walker ARA in 1871 for the Wilkie Collins novel and play, *The Woman in White*, made a bigger splash. Walker's design is generally credited as Britain's first pictorial poster, a dramatic depiction of a woman looking behind her and raising a finger to her lips as she opens a door out into the starry night. It was engraved by W.H. Hopper and despite its lack of colour was admired for its drama

Design by Frederick Walker ARA (1840–75) for Wilkie Collins's play, *The Woman in White*. Produced in 1871, it is considered the progenitor of the pictorial poster, and was as sensational as the play itself.

'I get inwardly wrathful whenever I think of your "Bubbles" in the hands of Pears as a soap advertisement! Gods of Olympus!' – Marie Corelli in a letter to John Everett Millais in December 1895. The novelist was not alone in her opinions, but Pears' adaptation of the painting created one of the world's most recognisable advertisements.

and daring simplicity. It also drew criticism from the literal-minded British public for failing to show a recognisable scene from the story. 'Ignorant of the fact,' commented, M.H. Spielmann in the *Modern Poster* in 1895, 'that was precisely Walker's intention and was, in truth, at the very root of his and of the modern principle of poster designing.'

Through the 1880s there was a growing fashion among manufacturers and industrialists for using the work of well-known painters in their advertising campaigns, the most prominent of which was the purchase of John Everett Millais's *Bubbles* by Pears' Soap. The exploitation of art by the commercial world raised more than a few disdainful eyebrows. Marie Corelli, the novelist, famously accused Millais of prostituting his talent to sell soap, but Millais had in fact no say in the matter. His painting had been bought by William Ingram, owner of the *Illustrated London News*, who then sold it to Thomas Barratt, managing director of A. & F. Pears, along with the copyright. Although Millais's painting (which featured his grandson) was originally meant as a serious work – the bubbles representing the transience of life – Barratt had immediately seen its very pertinent potential and a few tweaks, including a carefully placed bar of soap, turned the picture into an advertiser's dream. Other eminent Academicians dipped their toe into the world of advertising, with modest success: Edward J. Poynter produced a poster with the goddess Minerva at its centre for the Guardian Assurance Company and Hubert von Herkomer designed a poster that also drew on neo-classical themes to advertise the *Magazine of Art*.

Not all crossovers from art to commerce were as successful as *Bubbles*, and it was clear from looking across the Channel that the most effective posters were those that were designed from scratch. In France, a coterie of artists – including Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Eugène Grasset, Théophile Steinlen, Alphonse Mucha and Jules Chéret – were elevating the poster to a higher art form and creating designs that were to embody the style and spirit of the Belle Époque. Chéret, in particular, who had begun his career as a lithographer in the 1860s, was considered the doyen of the French poster movement and perfected a trademark style in which delightfully frivolous coquettes danced across the hoardings in an effervescent froth of frilled skirts and flowing champagne. Chéret's success was owed in part to the patronage of the cosmetics manufacturer, Rimmel, who financed his lithographic studio, an association that imbued his work with a dainty femininity. The chic, fun-loving poster girls of Chéret popped and fizzed with life and would be the benchmark against which all other poster artists measured themselves.

It would be another twenty years before British poster design truly hit its stride, and even then the poster sometimes found it difficult to shake off its infamous reputation. The National Vigilance Association, formed from members who were on a crusade to protect the country's moral welfare, moved quickly to condemn any posters they felt were indecent and likely to pollute the minds of innocents. In 1890, the Royal Aquarium, in Westminster, London was struggling to fill its auditorium. Ticket sales had plummeted due to an outbreak of influenza and competition in the form of P.T. Barnum's circus. The aquarium's manager, a Captain Molesworth, decided some bold marketing was required and commissioned a poster to promote their latest act, a lady acrobat known by the name of Zaeo. Shown wearing her stage costume and captured in a diving pose that left little to the admittedly limited Victorian imagination, the poster came to the attention of the National Vigilance Association, which, claiming to have received complaints about it from none other than Cardinal Newman, as well as various churches and religious groups, brought the matter before the

Some Gallic flair brought to London's walls with a cluster of posters by Jules Chéret. The ubiquitous Pears' 'Bubbles' poster can also be seen top right. Engraving in the *Illustrated Sporting & Dramatic News*, 18 March 1893.

Theatres and Music Hall Committee of the London County Council. Although no examples of the poster survive for us to make a judgement on its propriety, in his speech to the association, Mr Coote, its secretary, at least has left us with his biased opinion:

> … up to the time when the Zaeo picture was flaunted before the eyes of the public, there has been no previous parallel for the offensiveness, grossness, vulgarity and indecency of hoarding pictures… . So dextrously has the picture been drawn that, looking without jaundiced eyes, but as men of the world, we must be led to the conviction that this lady actually appears in the same nude condition. The arms are extended in a manner which exhibits a part that is hardly delicate.

In fact, even the judge who was presiding over the case seemed puzzled by the association's outrage, pointing out that Zaeo's arms were the only part of her that was uncovered, and that surely her costume was necessary if she were to ably perform her gymnastic displays. The solicitor acting on behalf of the Royal Aquarium also emphasised the lady's unblemished reputation, which the National Vigilance Association was doing everything in its power to undo, and that she had performed in the very same costume in front of several crowned heads of Europe. Nevertheless, Captain Molesworth was given an ultimatum: withdraw the posters or face losing his licence. He acquiesced but the poster – and the associated scandal – had worked its magic. It must have irked the National Vigilance Association to learn that the aquarium's attendance suddenly doubled in the wake of the squabble. It is a tale that proves, if nothing else, the potent power a poster can wield.

Interviewed by the *Pall Mall Gazette* in October that year, Walter Hill, Chairman of the United Billposters' Association, gave short shrift to the prudery of those who had caused such a furore, arguing, 'if an athlete in an athletic costume in pursuance of her vocation gives no offence to right-minded persons, a faithful picture of her should not do so either'. However, he also used the interview as a platform to argue the case for the poster:

> I should like to know what you would do without bill-posters. In these days advertising is necessary to Governments and governing powers in varying degrees, and in various ways, and is adopted by and necessary to the largest and most successful commercial enterprises of this country. Bill-posting commands and receives a large and increasing support; and if we rise to our opportunities will obtain a larger share still of the hundreds of thousands of pounds now spent annually in this little island of ours in other advertising channels… . In the present day, in lieu of the old buildings and ramshackle fences, we have extensive areas of well-erected hoardings in prominent positions in every city… .

Posters were becoming an essential component of the country's economy, shifting products and oiling the wheels of commerce. It was also clear that poster design was responsible for creating a desirability around a product and that, by allying art with middle-class aspirations, there was the opportunity to buy a tasteful lifestyle by investing in the advertised commodity. 'The best means of enlisting middle class sympathy, and attracting middle class cash, is to appeal without any slow of artistic superiority, to middle class taste and understanding,' wrote William Snow Rogers, poster artist and advertising expert.

The year 1894 – four years after the Zaeo poster scandal – was to be a pivotal year in the development of the poster in Britain and, by coincidence, the venue for its reinvention was the Royal Aquarium. From October 1894 to January 1895, an exhibition of 193 posters was held in its gallery, the first of its kind in Britain. It was arranged by Edward Bella, an artist and London gallery owner who was attuned to the growing popularity of poster art in Europe. Bella assembled an impressive selection of designs in which the French artists dominated, particularly Jules Chéret who showed forty-eight posters, a quarter of the entire display. In comparison, British artists were mainly represented by just one or two posters each, and one newspaper reviewer was disappointed to discover not a single English poster reproduced in the accompanying catalogue. Nevertheless, the show brought together a rising cohort of British poster artists who, even if they were in the minority, were represented by interesting and often unconventional work. There was *Hamlet* by William Nicholson and James Pryde (known collectively as the Beggarstaff Brothers), showing a simple figure, a living shadow of the prince, against a sparse mud-coloured background; a quietly effective essay in restraint. Aubrey Beardsley's linear, eerie eccentricity was used to full effect in his poster for the Pseudonym Library. Both Beardsley and the Beggarstaffs, in their different ways, showed the far-reaching impact of Japanese art in Europe at this time; the Beggarstaffs in their confident employment of negative space and Beardsley in his elongated figures and decorative border.

The most popular British poster artist at the time of the exhibition, Dudley Hardy, had five designs on show. In his posters for Jerome K. Jerome's *To-day* and *St. Paul's* magazine and for the famous Gaiety Theatre run by George Edwardes, Hardy epitomised the dashing, wasp-waisted 'it girl' of the fin-de-siècle. His style owes an unmistakable debt to Chéret, exhibiting the same flirtatious panache and animated bustle as the Frenchman. However, Hardy differed by also using large swathes of bright reds and yellows, often as a complete backdrop to his

Clear similarities between the work of the great French poster artist, Jules Chéret (left) and the leader of the British poster school in the early 1890s, Dudley Hardy (right), with his famous Gaiety Girl creation.

posters, which were given a square, playful style of lettering. These techniques, as well as a tendency to focus his designs on a single figure, helped to create a bold simplicity that was particularly effective for posters, most of which needed to be seen from a distance, often fleetingly. London's air quality at this time was so bad that posters would quickly become grimy, particularly because billstickers usually pasted over as well as behind a poster, giving a tacky surface on which soot and dirt would quickly accumulate. Creating a visual impact, as Hardy was able to do, was the key to a poster's success in the cities of late Victorian Britain.

In France, admiration for the artistic poster had triggered a craze for collecting. Charles Hiatt, writing in the *Studio* magazine on the subject in 1893, pointed out that one well-known Parisian publisher, M. Ed. Sagot, 'has issued an illustrated catalogue of over a hundred pages in which some two thousand two hundred examples are listed'. Bella's exhibition, and a subsequent show at the same venue in 1896, meant that the British too were soon bitten by the poster collecting bug. Bella, writing in the *Morning Post* in 1895, was quite prepared to take credit for this:

> Who can observe the hoarding of the present day and be unimpressed by the gradual disappearance of the lithographic artisan and the genuine feeling for form and colour that are replacing his crude efforts? This progress is mainly due to the exhibition of artistic posters held at the Aquarium last year and the numerous articles in reviews and magazines that have since appeared.

Magazines were beginning to give the poster the credit it deserved and positioned poster art as a recognised discipline. In 1898, a dedicated journal, the *Poster*, was founded by Sidney Ransom, dealing with all aspects of poster design and aimed at both the artistic community as well as connoisseurs and amateur enthusiasts. In its first issue, it reminded readers of the very recent transformation in commercial art:

> Twenty years ago, the only pictures on our hoardings were bad reproductions of wretched jumbles, that were an eye-sore to passers-by, a disgrace to art, and an object of derision to artists. To-day much of this is changed; thanks to the influence of foreign peoples and the originality of our best men, l'affiche has become an important branch of art, recognised and patronised not only by those to whom its present prominent position is due, but by all interested in art, from the academician to the curio collector.

The latter was catered to by the short-lived *Poster Collectors Circular*, published in 1899, which advised on where to buy posters, the sums paid for them, as well as their care and storage. It is worth considering that without this 'postermania' and the resulting interest and available information, it is unlikely that so many posters (essentially an ephemeral item), would have survived.

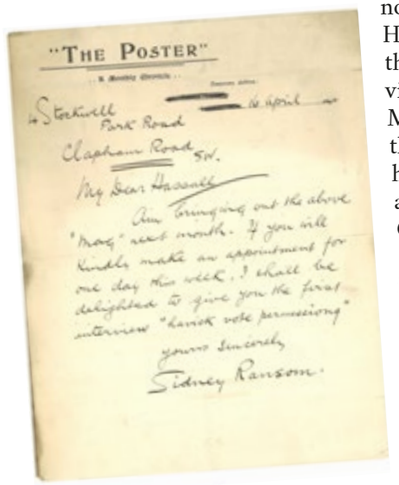
One news report in the *Poster Collectors Circular* is a particularly vivid example of the pervasive influence of the poster at the time. In February 1899, at the Avenue Studio in Fulham, a 'Poster Ball' was held in which all the costumes were based on famous posters. 'The success of this interesting function – and it was an unqualified success – shows how strong a hold the Poster has taken upon us, and it says much for the advance of Poster Art, that we may go to our hoardings for inspiration,' commented the circular.

At the time of the first poster exhibition at the Royal Aquarium, a twenty-six-year-old artist, having completed his art training abroad, was feeling optimistic about his future after two of his paintings were exhibited at the Royal Academy that summer. Very soon, his name – John Hassall – would become inextricably linked with the poster. Did he visit Bella's exhibition? While there is no evidence to suggest so, it would

John Hassall pictured in his studio, January 1900.

seem natural that he did. He lived in Notting Hill and he and his young wife frequently went about town, enjoying exhibitions and shows. Having studied in Antwerp and Paris, he had already been exposed to the sophisticated work of the French posterists; he particularly admired Mucha. He would have certainly relished the opportunity to see a curated selection of the very best French posters in one place. It is a romantic but entirely plausible notion to imagine that Hassall strolled around the Royal Aquarium viewing these posters. Might he have considered that one day in the future he would himself become a poster artist to rival Chéret and Hardy?

Whatever his thoughts in this imaginary scenario, nobody could have predicted quite how rapidly Hassall would rise to the top of his profession. He may have achieved early success with his fine art, but it was as a commercial artist that he would find worldwide fame. By the beginning of 1896 he was designing his first commissioned posters and in September of that year his work was considered worthy enough to be included in the prestigious French survey of poster art, 'Les Affiches Étagères Illustrées', in which Joseph Pennell, the author of the chapter on English posters, observed, 'Pour le moment à Londres, M. Hassall est plus en vue que tout autre.' By the time the *Poster* magazine had launched in January 1898, he had gained such a reputation that Sidney Ransom wrote and asked if he would be the first artist profiled in the interview slot of its debut issue. At the Poster Ball in Fulham the following year, special mention was given to two costumes based on his posters, including 'an exquisite and deliciously harmonious reproduction of a Colman's Mustard poster after J. Hassall'.


"THE POSTER"

Letter from the *Poster* magazine, requesting Hassall give an interview in its first issue in 1898, an indication of his rapid ascent to becoming Britain's leading poster artist within just a couple of years.

In 1900, just four short years after he had produced his first poster, John Hassall showed no fewer than twenty-eight posters at the first International Advertisers' Exhibition at Crystal Palace, the same number as Hardy, who had become a close friend. The following year, he was on the committee of the newly formed Poster Academy, alongside other leading British poster artists Cecil Aldin, Tom Browne, Dudley Hardy, Bernard Partridge, James Pryde, W.S. Rogers and Will True. The

Front cover of the International Advertisers' Exhibition at Crystal Palace in 1901, designed by Hassall. Particular emphasis was given to a show of the Poster Academy at which Hassall exhibited thirty-six designs.

Poster Academy, so named to reflect its ambitious plans to foster the very finest work in its field, held its first exhibition at the second Crystal Palace International Advertisers' Exhibition in 1901. This time, the catalogue listed thirty-six posters by Hassall, twelve more than Chéret, and more than any other exhibiting artist. For good measure, he also designed the catalogue cover. Hassall never did things by halves and his meteoric rise to artistic fame was no exception. His fledgling career coincided with the arrival of that first wave of poster artists in Britain, and although he began by trailing in their wake, it was not long before he rushed 'to the front rank', as the *Studio* observed, and became something of a celebrity in the process. By the early 1900s such was his popularity and the prominence of his work that he was becoming fêted as the country's leading posterist. A profile of him in the prestigious *Studio*, in 1905, reflected that he, 'had made so many successful posters that in this department he is a kind of king'. He was variously given similar nicknames. 'The Prince of Posters' was one, but most frequently he became known as, 'The Poster King'. One letter sent to him in 1908 from a London-based admirer gives some sense of the impact his posters were having on the Edwardian public:

Dear Mr Hassall
I derive so much pleasure from your posters as they appear on the hoardings and railway stations, that I feel I must write a note of thanks and appreciation. They are splendid and have provided much amusement to myself and my friends whose attention I always draw to them whenever I get a chance.
Please go on brightening our streets with your wholesome fun. 'The Vacuum Cleaner' and 'It's so Simple' sent me off in roars of laughter. I wish some day you would have them all reproduced either on postcard or in a book. Such pictures do us good and life is very wearying and monotonous to many of us at times.
Goodbye now, may there be many good things still to come.
Yours sincerely
H. Cecil

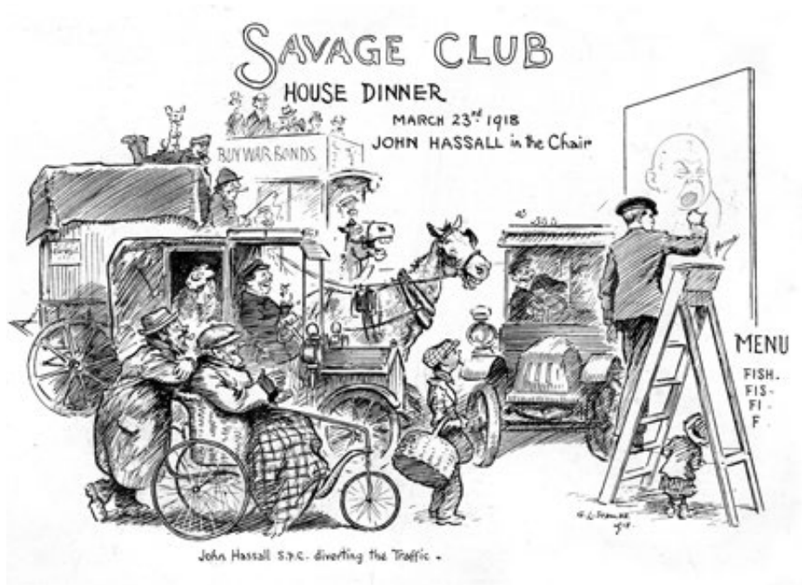
Yet, posters, though significant, were just one aspect of his extraordinary output. John Hassall was a book

Hassall, viewed from his so-called poster room, seen reclining on a chaise longue in the studio at 88 Kensington Park Road. Pinned around the doorway can be seen some of his well-known designs for theatrical posters, including *The Daughters of Babylon*, *The French Maid* and *Orlando Dando*. The photograph was reproduced in a feature, 'Artists at Home: John Hassall' in the *Sketch* issue of 31 January 1900.

and magazine illustrator, as well as a designer of postcards, greeting cards, china and nursery décor. He worked on larger paintings which he exhibited at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour (RI) and galleries around the country, and he ran a successful art school which was to nurture some of the twentieth century's most successful artists. He was an active member of a number of clubs and regularly gave lectures, and made appearances at charity functions. Juggling countless commissions for publishers, manufacturers, political parties, theatres, city corporations, charities and travel companies, Hassall was one of the most prolific of artists and energetic of men; a doting husband and father, an adored member of a busy family home and a well-liked personality among his extensive network of friends and acquaintances.

In his day he was a household name, his signature and surname synonymous with images that were part of the fabric of daily life, and yet, say 'John Hassall' today and most people would struggle to think of who he is. Mention instead, *Skegness is SO Bracing*, his most famous poster featuring the iconic jolly fisherman prancing across the sands of the Lincolnshire coast, and there is immediate recognition. It says something for the strength of his art that although with the passage of time he may have drifted into obscurity, some of his posters remain etched in the public consciousness and undisputedly part of the poster art canon. This book celebrates John Hassall's art, but it also brings into focus the man and his world, presenting the case for why it was that the Poster King so thoroughly deserved his crown.

A billposter drawn by Hassall to illustrate the poster course in the brochure for the John Hassall Correspondence Art School, *c.* 1920.



Hassall depicted by fellow artist, G.L. Stampa for a Savage Club dinner in 1918, stopping traffic as he draws posters directly on to the hoardings.

BIOGRAPHY

THE POSTER KING

John Hassall liked to tell a good story. Journalists who made the pilgrimage to his Notting Hill studio found an interviewee brimming with anecdotes, opinions and advice, who talked freely about his haphazard road to artistic success and took pleasure in concluding his tales with a humorous punchline. He embraced his celebrity status, not through any sense of self-importance but rather due to a boyish enthusiasm for being given the opportunity to share his stories.

He was a married man of twenty-six by the time he embarked on his career as an artist, a comparatively late bloomer, and the experiences that led him to that point were recounted with frequency in the press. While many artists were likely to claim that artistic talent had shown itself at an early age, Hassall's success seemed all the more extraordinary, as he had shown little inclination towards art, let alone a prodigious talent.

John Hassall, pictured in his studio in 1909. Ettlinger published and distributed a series of 'Postcard Artists' portrait cards, and this is one of the best-known images of Hassall.

He told the *Captain* magazine in 1902:

> I don't remember ever drawing anything when I was a boy. Of course, my mother says I did, and she ought to know, but with all due respect to the mater, I fancy she has imagined it since. You know, one would have thought, if I had been such a lightning artist in the days of my youth, that my mother would have preserved some evidence of it, but I ask for it in vain. There is none extant.

He may not have shown any early promise, but a story he wrote himself in *Answers* magazine in 1909, though told in his inimitable jokey fashion, rings true and suggests there was a moment when his artistic journey began:

> Once upon a time – this is not a fairy-tale – there was a little boy named Jack, whose mother made him stay indoors because it was raining. Now Jack didn't want to stay indoors, and he decided that if he could make things wetter inside than out, his mother might choose the lesser of the two evils, and give him his way. So he began to cry as fast as only two eyes will permit anybody to cry.
>
> Then his mother, to comfort him, got out a paint-box and a magazine, which contained a print of a large turkey. This she proceeded to colour a vivid yellow, and the yellower the turkey became, the less the little boy cried, until at least it was so shockingly yellow that he stopped crying altogether, and fell to thinking how wonderful it would be if, when he grew up, he could make such beautiful, bright things out of nothing but a box of paints.

Knowing what we do about John Hassall, it is a potent image; the little boy mesmerised by the simplicity of a bright yellow bird. Hassall would become renowned for the bold colour contrasts and confident line of his poster designs. Perhaps this was the moment his talent as a poster artist was kindled.

John Hassall was born on 21 May 1868 at Walmer, close to the seaside town of Deal on the Kent coast. His father, a Royal Navy officer, Lieutenant Christopher Clark Hassall, had served during the Crimean War. He married Louisa Sparkes Owen, who lived just a few doors away from him in Cadogan Place in Chelsea, at the Holy Trinity Church on Sloane Street on 30 June 1863. Six children would follow: Margaret, Lilian, John, Owen, Constance and Arthur. The 1871 census shows Louisa, aged thirty, and her four eldest children (Constance and Arthur were yet to come), living at 6 Albert Terrace in Deal, along with five servants, a number that indicated the family's comfortable, upper middle-class status. The absence of Christopher at home is explained by his appearance instead

John (left) with his mother, Louisa, and younger brother, Owen. The photograph was taken in the mid-1870s, possibly just after the death of the boys' father.

John Hassall, aged 17 or 18, in 1886, when he was finishing his schooling at Neuenheim, Heidelberg.

as a guest at the Cadogan Hotel on that date, close to his family's London home. Christopher Hassall's naval career came to an end abruptly following an accident on board his ship, which left him in a wheelchair, and on 29 April 1876, a month before John's eighth birthday, he died, aged just thirty-eight. After a period of mourning, his mother remarried in 1879, choosing a Royal Marines officer, William Purvis Wright, who would eventually rise to Deputy Adjutant-General Royal Marines (professional head of the Royal Marines) and receive a knighthood in 1904. Sir William would prove to be a good step-father; in Hassall's diaries in later life, he is simply referred to as W.P.W.

After a spell at school in Worthing, John was sent away to be educated in Devon, together with his brother Owen. They attended Newton Abbot College in Wolborough village, a suburb of Newton Abbot. It was a small, select establishment, perhaps best known for educating the writer Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch and the explorer Percival H. Fawcett, who famously disappeared in the Brazilian jungle in the 1920s. After Newton Abbot, John completed his schooling at Neuenheim, just outside Heidelberg in Germany, which had a reputation for providing young English men with a Continental education. John remembered his three years at Neuenheim with great fondness, and had a particular soft spot for one of the masters who took the boys on hiking holidays through Switzerland, where they learnt self-sufficiency by camping outdoors and eating meals cooked over a campfire. In adulthood, he would become an 'Old Neuenheimer', one of a group of around 150 old boys of the school who met each year for an annual dinner in London to reminisce over times in Germany. A number of their menu cards survive, designed by Hassall.

Hunting sketch signed with Hassall's initials and dated 1887, an early example of his draughtsmanship some time before the idea of becoming an artist had entered his mind.

He would tell journalists that his favourite lessons at Neuenheim were German and Art, and yet they were the two subjects he failed when he came to sit the entrance examination for Sandhurst. It may have been an embellished detail to give his story-telling an extra twist, but what is true is that John Hassall, despite a solid educational grounding, failed to fulfil his destiny. As the son of a naval officer and step-son of a high-ranking Marines officer, there was an expectation that he would also follow a military or naval career. In later life, with his status as an artist established, he was jovial about his failure, but at the time, with no other career path obviously open to him, it must have been a humiliating result. Nevertheless, it was one that was to set his life on a different course.

The 1880s was a time of mass emigration from the UK to Canada. The Canadian government actively advertised for Europeans to come and settle on the prairies of the Canadian West, where land and opportunities were plentiful for prospective farmers. John and his brother, Owen, were just two of thousands of young men who decided to try their luck building a new life in Canada during this period, and in May 1888 they boarded the SS *Polynesien* at Liverpool, bound for Quebec. The ship was one of the vessels of the Montreal Ocean Steamship Company, popularly known as the Allan Line, which specifically transported emigrants between the UK and Canada. It is notable that of the almost 800 passengers on board during their voyage, a quarter of them were single English men.

The Hassall brothers settled in Clanwilliam, a cluster of homesteads near Minnedosa, in Manitoba province, about 140 miles west of Winnipeg. Government campaigns to encourage settlers specifically targeted nations that were perceived as physically, culturally and psychologically suited to the challenges of life on the remote Canadian prairies. Having no agricultural experience and coming from a privileged background, the brothers on paper did not appear to be natural candidates. Life was tough but Hassall seems to have risen to the challenge, exhibiting a resourcefulness and appetite for hard work that would become a lifelong hallmark of his character. They experimented with crops, kept cattle and made friends with other homesteaders nearby, most of whom shared in a kind of barter economy. Hassall would keep a diary for most of his life and, although never hugely detailed, it builds up a picture of daily life in Canada and its relentless list of chores. On a typical day, recorded in the spring of 1889, he noted his activities: 'Made ladder to loft. Went over to Machinny's for bread. Made box for seeds. Got some eggs from Hopkins. Put four loads of hay in loft. Mended my new overalls. Cut willow stakes.' On another, in April, a visitor was supposed to arrive but John wrote with resignation, 'train 8 hours late'. During the wait he, 'Walked for mail, saw two wolves. Built pig sty. Piled planks with Crawley.'

Most days he chopped wood or cut up the beef from their cattle. The livestock needed feeding, buildings around the farm required maintenance and crops had to be tended.

A watercolour view of a farmstead belonging to fellow settlers at Clanwilliam in the depths of winter 1889.

Looking the very picture of rough and ready frontiersmen, John (left) and Owen (sitting on floor) Hassall in a studio portrait with three friends, taken in Minnedosa in 1888. The other men are William Crosbie (middle) and Lionel Bigg (right), while Mr Barrett (seated) lived in the homestead painted by Hassall (above).

Skating in Manitoba, another example of Hassall's early pictures depicting life in Canada.

The winters, in particular, required stamina. On 20 January 1889, a heavy snowfall meant that church was cancelled, leading him to remark wryly, 'Am slowly becoming an infidel.' Five days later, with the mercury plummeting to -45°F he remarked bluntly, 'Pretty damned cold. Cut wood.' Hassall also wrote 'dozens of letters' but confided to his diary, with a touch of self-pity, that he feared he would get no answers. There were, however, moments of light relief; one entry mentions that the chief amusement in the snow was, 'sliding on our bottoms down the slope in the yard by the barn'. By February the following year we sense that the Canadian winters were beginning to take their toll, when one irritable diary entry simply states, 'Too Bally Blizzardy for anything.' He also writes despondently on another occasion how his moccasins got soaked during some particularly foul weather.

While there was no shortage of things to do during the day, the evenings were long. To pass the time, Hassall wrote letters home and read (he mentions starting *Jess* by H. Rider Haggard, in January 1889). He also began to draw. On 17 March 1889, he noted in his diary, 'Drew the saw mill', and a handful of landscapes and scenes of his life in Canada still survive today in his archives. When a local art exhibition to be held at Minnedosa was announced – quite an event in such a remote outpost – Hassall decided to submit some of his efforts, driving his cart into Minnedosa to deliver them. His efforts won him all three prizes at the exhibition. He began to realise that, perhaps, he had some talent when he entered a second exhibition with the same result, but gallantly withdrew from any further art competitions; a diplomatic move that allowed the daughter of the local mayor to take the prize. Emboldened by his success, Hassall decided to post some of his drawings to the *Daily Graphic* in London, in the belief that readers back in Britain would be interested to see what life was like in Canada. The scene he drew was a 'surprise party', a novelty brought over to Canada from America. His explanation of that picture, given in an interview in the *Strand* magazine some years later, gives an insight into the community spirit among settlers at the time:

> I and my partner had just finished putting up our house in Clanwilliam, fifteen miles from the nearest townlet, Minnedosa, in Manitoba, when one winter's night we were inundated by sleigh-loads of visitors, each load bringing cakes and other refreshments, and lamps and a fiddle. The first-comers pulled down our stove-pipe and deposited the stove outside in the snow, hammered in nails anywhere suitable and hung up their lamps and proceeded to have a dance till about four in the morning, when they left us to put the house right again.

Hassall claimed to have sent his drawings with no expectations, and so when he received a copy of the paper dated 26 February 1890, with his picture published inside, shortly followed by a cheque rewarding him for his efforts, he began to wonder if his newly discovered aptitude for art could develop into something more than a hobby. Encouraged by friends, who viewed earning a living from drawing as far preferable to the relentless graft of farming, he made an instinctive decision and on 10 September 1890 was on his way back to England, arriving back in Liverpool on the *Edmonton* the 25th. Owen had stayed behind in Canada, where he embarked on what would be a long and eventful military career. He briefly joined the North-West Mounted Police before moving to the 76th, 2nd Battalion, the Duke of Wellington's West Riding Regiment, stationed at

An amusing cartoon strip-style illustration by Hassall recounting the tale of an old school friend who visited him in Canada. It gives a delightful glimpse into his life in Manitoba as he chops wood, builds a bed for his visitor, lights the temperamental stove and his friend makes do with the rudimentary outdoor washing facilities.

"A SURPRISE PARTY."—BY JOHN HASSALL, R.I.

Hassall's first published drawing, showing an impromptu Christmas party with neighbours in his Clanwilliam cabin, appeared in the *Daily Graphic* on 26 February 1890. Its publication would be the catalyst for a career change, and a few months later Hassall left Canada, intent on becoming an artist.

John Hassall (bottom) with Charles Van Havermaet (middle) and a fellow student, Sandy Fraser of Aberdeen, in the Van Havermaet's garden in Antwerp, *c.* 1891.

Halifax, Nova Scotia. He would go on to serve in Jamaica (1891–1892), and then South Africa (1893–5), where he distinguished himself during the Matabele Campaign, later earning a commission in the Cheshire Regiment. He served in India and West Africa before promotion to Captain in the 2nd Royal Warwickshire Regiment in 1901. He finally returned to England in 1903–04, where he became superintendent of the military prison on Devonport. The brothers had taken radically different career paths but remained close throughout their lives.

Deciding to become an artist was one thing, but the practicalities of how to achieve that was a different matter. Once home, Hassall gained a letter of introduction to the elderly painter, Thomas Sidney Cooper RA, who he visited at his home in Canterbury. Cooper was less than complimentary about the examples Hassall had brought along and suggested he choose a different career path. It was a disappointing knockback, but not one that discouraged him, though he had little choice other than to persist. After the Sandhurst failure and giving up his life in Canada, there must have been some personal pride in remaining steadfast in this career change. Neither would he have wished to be a burden to his mother and step-father. While in Canada, he had requested £250 to be drawn from money held in trust for him until he came of age, and in a letter to the bank from his uncle, Arthur Owen, who was one of the trustees, Arthur explained that his nephew had been informed that the money should be invested in the farm. We do not know if the money was put into the farm or not, but Hassall must have felt an obligation to prove that becoming an artist was more than a mere flight of fancy.

Back at home in Deal, he spent some time making what he described as 'little sea sketches', as he weighed up his options. However, as he told a journalist from the *Young Woman* magazine in the early 1900s, 'I hardly knew there were such things as Art Schools when I did my first sketches in Canada, but when I made up my mind to go in for drawing and painting, I thought I had better do the thing properly.' The Académie Royale des Beaux-Arts d'Anvers in Antwerp was recommended, a school supported by the state and therefore free to any students, including those from overseas. Hassall presented himself there without any sample drawings to prove his ability. He told the story to the *Captain* magazine:

Somebody told me that there was a free School of Art at Antwerp. That was just my sort, so, in my usual haphazard way, I crossed to Antwerp and presented myself at the Academy there. They asked me if I had any sketches, and I said I had not. While they were trying to make me understand that they must have something in proof of my aptitude, and while I was trying to make them understand that any sketches I had were in England, an old man came along. He was evidently well-known there, and indeed, as I learned afterwards, was on a visit of inspection. He said, when he understood my grievance, 'You vill come to my studio, and in any months I vill make you to be an artist' – 'In any months' was his way of saying 'in a few months'. I found that my good friend was P. (Pieter) van Havermaet, and he and his son, a younger man than myself, taught me everything I know.

Hassall and the van Havermaets would become firm friends during his time as a student and beyond. While 'Old Van' died in 1897, his son Charles would regularly spend time in London in the company of his friend and former pupil.

After some time receiving instruction from Charles van Havermaet, he joined classes at the art school, where, as one of a large number of 'Ingleeshmannen' he embraced student life, soon placing himself at the centre of social events. Several years later, in 1899, the *Poster* magazine ran an article on 'The Artistic Atmosphere of Antwerp', featuring a photograph taken a few years previously, lent by Hassall, and showing his studio filled with fellow students, probably attending what was described as his 'daily afternoon teas "met cookskies", always a rendezvous for all comers, and when, amongst discussions artistic the possibilities of the "Poster" were often brought forward'. Another depicts a group of students dressed as 'Indians and Cowboys' for the carnival of 1894, an early example of Hassall's lifelong enthusiasm for fancy dress. As far as studies were concerned, students were expected to attend the academy for eight hours a day, as well as practise at 'sketch clubs' three nights a week, usually at a café with a paid life model. They were also encouraged to sketch outdoors

A watercolour of the rooftops of Antwerp, 1892 (note that Hassall gives it the French name of Anvers), the view from the bedroom window of his student digs. Accommodation in the city was cheap and plentiful, and over 30 years later, in an interview with the *Daily Mirror*, he recalled his board and lodging cost FF3 a day.

Study from life, Antwerp, *c.* 1892.

regularly. Studios and apartments were cheap, and artist supplies could be purchased from a shop close to the academy, run by a Madame Van Roosmaelen, whose kindness earned her the title, 'The Antwerp Mother of the Englishmen'. John would retain links with Antwerp after he finished his studies, occasionally travelling back there for short holidays. In August 1899, he went alone for a week-long trip, meeting up with his friend Charlie van Havermaet, enjoying a night at the opera at the Scala, going to see the Van Dycks and, of course, calling in to Madame Van Roosmaelen's to buy some brushes.

Hassall studied for six months in Antwerp, making enough progress to travel to Paris where he attended the prestigious Académie Julian, founded by Rodolphe Julian. While there, he was taught by Gabriel Ferrier, as well as the academy's star tutor and one of France's greatest nineteenth-century painters, William-Adolphe Bouguereau. Bouguereau's traditional, academic style would fall from favour among the Parisian avant-garde, and after his death in 1905 his work was overshadowed by the Impressionists, but he was widely admired in his lifetime and commanded high prices from patrons who could not get enough of his marble-skinned nymphs and goddesses. For students such as Hassall, learning the rudiments of figurative composition, there can have been few more rigorous teachers than Bouguereau. Hassall was also in Paris at the height of its love affair with the artistic poster, and he would have been exposed daily to hoardings displaying the designs of Chéret, Grasset, Steinlen, Toulouse-Lautrec, and his favourite, Mucha. Although he would go on to develop a strong personal style of his own, Hassall's early work clearly reflects the influences he absorbed during his years in Antwerp and Paris. Another was a love of Flemish art, and particularly Rembrandt. Rembrandt's softly lit paintings seem to bear no relation to the flat swathes of colour that would characterise Hassall's poster work, but many of his watercolour paintings take on a more sombre colour scheme and atmosphere that is redolent of the Dutch master. Even the picturesque, ancient architecture of Antwerp (and Heidelberg) would inspire a lifelong

Right: One of Hassall's famous afternoon teas in his rooms when a student in Antwerp. The picture accompanied a feature in the *Poster* magazine in 1899 about student life in the city. Printed very small, the quality is poor but it gives a fascinating view of his room with numerous pictures pinned to the wall. Hassall is seen centre, handing out coffee made over a stove. Always sociable and a genial host, throughout his life he cultivated a wide circle of friends and acquaintances from the artistic world and beyond.

fascination with a kind of fairy-tale medievalism, seen most frequently in his illustrations for children's stories and nursery rhymes.

At some point during his studies, Hassall met fellow student Isabella Dingwall, of Helensburgh, Dunbartonshire, and fell in love. Belle, as she is referred to in his diaries, was the daughter of John Dingwall, an architect, and the couple married in Helensburgh on 25 October 1894. We know that Hassall spent time in Helensburgh prior to the marriage, as a page of sketches by him, entitled, 'The Naval Manoeuvres: Light in Dark Places', of a searchlight illuminating various petty crimes committed in a coastal town, was published in the *Graphic* on 30 July 1892. Its publication shows he was trying his luck at sending in illustrations during his studies, and in this case had managed to get published. After spending their honeymoon in Switzerland, where Hassall noted in his log book that he painted a portrait for £10, the newlyweds returned to London. They rented a house at 88 Kensington Park Road in Notting Hill, a large, five storey town house, next door but one to the grand, pedimented St Peter's Church. It was a smart address in an area populated largely by well-heeled members of the professional class. The house had the advantage of an outside space at the back and Hassall arranged with the landlord for the garden to be roofed over with glass, giving him a large studio annexe, reached by walking through his so-called 'poster room'. Conveniently placed for trips into town, close to his mother and step-father who now had a London residence at 34 Arundel Gardens a short walk away, and with enough space to embark on his artistic career as well as entertain friends, 88 Kensington Park Road was perfect. It would remain Hassall's home until his death in 1948.

John and Belle made a handsome couple. The photographs that survive of Belle show her to be something of a beauty, with fine features and a pale, ethereal gaze. Hassall's appearance was always the subject of comment by journalists. He had thick hair, a luxuriant moustache and a heavy brow that made him look more intimidating than he actually was. Standing at almost 6 ft, he was tall for the time, and well-built, with a physique that probably owed something to the endless hours spent chopping wood in Canada. For an artist, there was something incongruously brisk and masculine about him; it was noted on more than one occasion that he had the appearance and bearing of a military man, something George Edgar, a journalist for the magazine *Modern Business* observed:

> Mr. Hassall, personally, is less like the conventional idea of the artist, than any art-worker I know. Tall, straight, close cropped, well-groomed and on the sunny side of the prime of life, he might pass more readily as an officer of the cavalry in particularly good spirits owing to a temporary release from duty.

Kensington Park Road, with number 88 annotated, and St Peter's Church just beyond. The house had one extra storey compared to the others in that part of the road. Hassall's studio took up most of the back garden. St Peter's would play a large part in family life.

ART SCHOOL

Cover of The John Hassall Correspondence Art School prospectus. The quaint figure seated at his easel on his high art stool became the mascot image of the school. Look carefully and there on the easel and stool legs are the Latin phrases, *Tempus Fugit* (Time Flies), and *Ars Longa* (Art is Long).

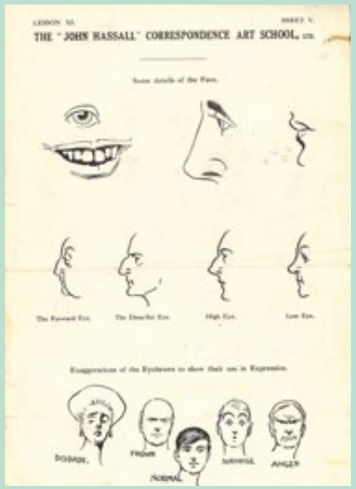
Design for the New Art School at Logan Place, possibly for a prospectus or invitation. Before the war the school merged with Frank Brangwyn's school and became the London School of Art.

When John Hassall and Dudley Hardy opened the New Art School early in 1906, they were entering a crowded market. There were numerous art schools already in London, including well-known establishments such as Heatherleys or Frank Calderon's School of Animal Painting in Baker Street. It was therefore important to have a unique selling point.

Both men were at the height of their fame and were able to capitalise on their popularity, but the New Art School also sought to differ from other institutions with a focus on poster design. *Arts and Crafts* magazine, writing in February 1906 about the new venture, assured readers that because 'Mr. Dudley Hardy, R.I., and Mr. John Hassall, R.I., are to be the teachers, it will be taken for granted that the instruction will be good'. Their celebrity led the *London Daily News* to comment that the school was for 'fashionable folk' and that 'many ladies well known in society will also sit at the feet of the two popular artists to learn how to illustrate books, design posters, or to paint immortal works in colour'. Hassall and Hardy, as founders, had firmer ideas, and intended to take on pupils who had already attained a level of proficiency and who were serious about a career in art. 'Our idea is to enable them to get beyond the common groove,' Hardy told the *London Daily News* reporter. 'One of our aims will be the cultivation of ideas and the expression of ideas.'

The school first opened in South Kensington at Clareville Grove, later moving to Logan Place, and tutors – some permanent, some visiting – included Ernest Borough Johnson, Arthur Hacker, G.A. Boden, Richard Jack and Philip de László. Hassall's old friend and tutor, Charles van Havermaet, moved to London in 1907, and while he took on private pupils in his studio, he combined this with teaching at the school. In particular, he nurtured the talent of both H.M. Bateman and Bruce

Advertisement for the school from the *Bystander*, 21 February 1917, featuring a self-portrait of Hassall signing his famous theatre poster of Sir John Martin Harvey in *The Only Way*.



Bairnsfather. Charles Moxon Orchardson was another tutor, who A.R. Thomson remembered as a 'sharp and harsh' teacher, who rather than lecture Thomas, who was deaf due to a childhood accident, took the trouble to write his comments in a notebook. Orchardson was killed in Egypt in 1917, and the school, emptying rapidly of pupils, temporarily closed due to the war. It re-opened soon after as a correspondence school, which successfully ran over the next two decades. In 1920, Hassall was joined by Joseph Simpson, who had made a name for himself during the war as an official artist of the RAF. Advertisements during this period heralded Simpson's arrival with a self-confident declaration: 'Here is your opportunity to train under two of the greatest Artists in the modern world.'

The school held regular exhibitions, both before and after it became a correspondence school, which were notable for the quality of the poster design. An annual poster competition in the pre-First World War period attracted as many as 300 entries, including a number from European countries. After the war, as a correspondence school, it still continued a regular programme of competitions.

The advantage of the correspondence school was that Hassall could teach art to anyone anywhere in the world. In this, the first page of a four-page letter from Hassall to Miss Muriel Robertson of Melbourne, Australia in 1925, he delivers a critique and advice on her drawings for 'Lesson II' with his usual charm. The correspondence course was taken in stages, with each lesson (such as this one, demonstrating facial details and expressions) designed to focus on a different aspect of drawing.

Henry Mayo Bateman (1887–1970), one of the twentieth century's finest cartoonists. While still a teenager he began to contribute drawings to the *Royal* magazine and the *Tatler*, but his inexperience required a guiding hand. He contacted Hassall, who, at the peak of his success, took him under his wing and recommended him to Charles van Havermaet, who tutored him for the next three years.

Bateman would never be an imitator of Hassall's style, but he had great admiration of his self-confidence and energy, describing being in his presence as being warmed in 'his radiance'.

Born into a military family, Captain Bruce Bairnsfather (1887–1959) left the army to train at the New School of Art in 1908. Unable to find enough work, he took a job as a lighting engineer until the outbreak of war in 1914. While serving as a machine gun officer with the Royal Warwickshires on the Western Front, he began drawing comic sketches for fellow officers, deciding to send one to the *Bystander* magazine. It was published on 31 March 1915, after which he contributed at least one cartoon a week both during and after the war. Featuring a cast of British Tommies with the curmudgeonly 'Old Bill' as their ringleader, Bairnsfather's cartoons were hugely popular and catapulted him to worldwide fame. There was some suggestion, partly due to the similarly luxuriant moustaches both sported, that Old Bill was inspired by Hassall. Bairnsfather remained in touch with his teacher for the rest of Hassall's life.

Malcolm Treacher, writing in the *Intercontinental Express* in 1905, gave a similar impression of him:

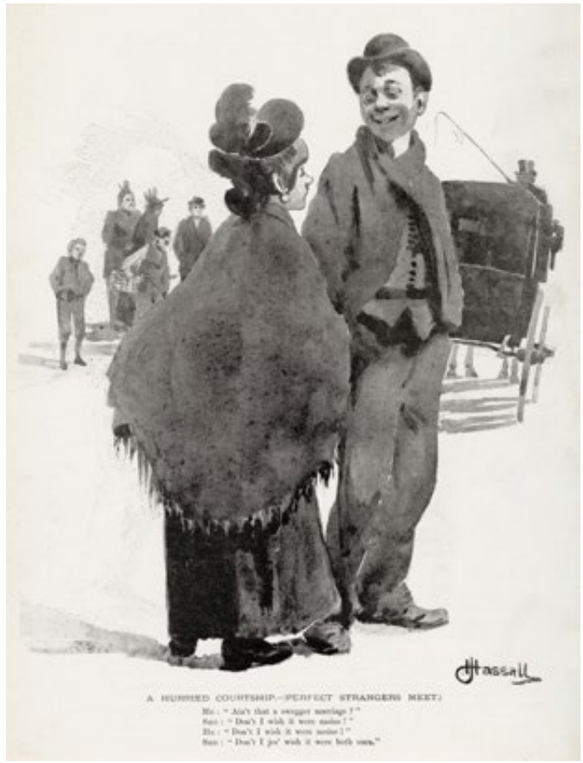
> There is the stamp of a trooper in his stride and in his easy carriage. There is the stamp of that bon-camaraderie which the camp-fire engenders, in his bluff, hearty manner, and there is the tall, well-knit frame of a Son of Mars to convincingly drive the impression home.

In 1894, with a new wife and having set up home, Hassall had also submitted two large oil paintings, done while in Antwerp, to the Royal Academy for its Summer Exhibition in May that year. The subjects were not particularly cheery. *Birds of Prey* was a gambling scene, while *Temporary Insanity* depicted a young woman about to commit suicide, but their acceptance left him flush with success. While that may have been proof of his ability as an artist, he soon realised that exhibition paintings, unless they sold, did not pay the bills. 'I came to London bent upon carrying all before me,' he told the *Captain* magazine, but added, 'I could not afford to spend six months upon a painting, as I had done upon "Birds of Prey".'

Four years after he had his first picture published in the *Daily Graphic*, and some small success with achieving publication in its weekly sister paper the *Graphic*, Hassall now turned towards the illustrated magazine market again to provide him with some regular income. It was a boom time for illustrators, or 'black and white artists' as they were known – so named because their pictures were usually published in monochrome – with new magazines launching all the time and most willing to pay for humorous or decorative illustrations and good ideas. Preeminent among these new titles was the *Sketch*, which had been founded in 1893 as a gossipy younger sibling to the venerable *Illustrated London News*. Published every Wednesday, the *Sketch*, which chose the sub-title, *Art and Actuality*, promised light-hearted coverage of theatre news, high society, fashion, sport, travel – and art. Over the years, it earned a reputation for discovering and fostering artistic talent of the humorous variety.

Oil painting by John of Belle in the early days of their marriage. Details in the picture, from the patterned screen and carved side table to Belle's green velvet dress and her banjo, reflect the couple's artistic tastes.

William Heath Robinson, a contemporary of Hassall's, admitted in his autobiography that it was his publication in the *Sketch* in 1906 that 'fairly launched me on my career as a humorous artist'. During the First World War, the *Sketch* introduced the glamorous and slightly risqué illustrations of Raphael Kirchner to its readers, and in the 1920s the magazine helped create a global phenomenon by publishing and publicising the Bonzo the Dog cartoons by George Studdy. In 1894 it was still a fledgling magazine, but with the backing of its sister paper, the *ILN*, and with the experienced journalist Clement Shorter at the helm (later to be replaced by Keble Howard and then Bruce Ingram), the *Sketch* was rapidly carving out a reputation for a better class of illustration; its masthead alone had been designed by the great *Punch* cartoonist, Edward Linley Sambourne. The *Sketch* remained in publication until 1959, outliving the majority of its contemporaries by some distance, and for much of that time continuing to champion art and illustration despite the inevitable encroachment of photography in the illustrated press. Hassall's first picture for the *Sketch* appeared on 17 January 1894, entitled *A Hurried Courtship*. Lacking the clarity and confidence of his subsequent pictures (even his signature looks self-consciously laboured), it is clear he had not quite settled into his typically assured style – but it was a start. Many more of his pictures would be published in the *Sketch* over the next two decades, often in series that would usually be a humorous skit on a given theme (The London Season was just one, with cartoons of robbers plundering grand houses while their owners are out rather than cartoons of debutante balls). One series even published some of his rejected poster designs. During the late 1890s and early 1900s, John Hassall, although not officially a member of staff, was claimed by the Sketch as one of their own artists.



Despite showing two oil paintings at the Royal Academy in 1894, the need for a regular income prompted Hassall to seek out work in illustrated magazines. This cartoon appeared in the *Sketch* on 17 January 1894, his first for the title. The *Sketch* had a reputation for nurturing illustrative talent and Hassall was among a number of artists the magazine published and championed early in their careers.

'Mr Willie' – William E. Allen (1860–1919) – from a portrait by Josephine Muntz Adams, *c.* 1910. A shrewd businessman, his ambitious plans to expand the David Allen & Sons business in London provided Hassall with a steady stream of work, mainly designing posters for the theatre.

However, there was no exclusivity in the relationship. By 1895, Hassall's log books list receipts from a growing number of magazines including, *Pick-Me-Up*, *Moonshine*, *Judy*, *St Paul's*, the *New Budget*, the *Gentlewoman* and *Scraps*. He was building up his client base, but he was aware of the precarious nature of freelance work, especially when limited to one area, and seems to have been keen to take on other work, perhaps mentioning his hopes to friends and family members.

Then, in the spring of 1896, another client's name appears with increasing frequency in the ledgers. David Allen & Sons was one of the country's leading printers of posters and advertising placards. Founded in Belfast by the printer David Allen, his four sons eventually took over the business and in the 1880s expanded by opening an office in London, headed by the third son, William ('Willie') Allen. Located at the corner of Lisle Street and Leicester Street, just off Leicester Square, the David Allen office had positioned itself at the heart of the capital's theatreland. The firm had already successfully managed a modest number of theatre clients in London from their base in Belfast, but Willie felt that a London office would seal the company's reputation and grow its business. The firm fashioned itself as what today would be called a full-service agency, not only printing posters but managing artists and organising the distribution of posters on the hoardings. Willie Allen secured a contract with the tour manager Fred Mouillot. For touring companies, advertising in each town was essential and they were expected to promote themselves heavily. Willie's deal with Mouillot was not only long-term and lucrative but did wonders for the profile of David Allen & Sons among provincial theatres as well. By the 1890s, business was booming.

Most biographies of John Hassall state that his relationship with David Allen & Sons began when he received a circular from the firm by chance, requesting artists send in samples of their work. In fact, correspondence in the Hassall archives show that his introduction came via a family friend, Major General John Macdonald Moody. Moody joined the Royal Marines in 1855 and must have known William Purvis Wright. He may even have known John's father, Christopher. Moody took an interest in a variety of charitable concerns for ex-servicemen, as well as being a supporter of the Boys' Brigade, and it is possible his visit to David Allen & Sons was in connection with discussing supply of posters for one or other of his causes. Whatever his reasons for being there, he was aware of Hassall's predicament and wrote to him on 18 December 1895, with the following news:

> My Dear Hassall
>
> When I was in Belfast, I went over Messrs David Allen & Sons lithographic works and was much struck with their high class work. As they have work for artists of ability I mentioned your name to Mr. Sam Allen, one of the sons, and he promised to send one of the London Managers to call on you. As you will be out of town until February or March, I am writing to him to tell him and to suggest that you should be asked to send over some specimens of your work.
>
> The firm do theatrical and other posters some of which you have noticed such as 'Charley's Aunt'. Mr. Morrow does a lot of their work. [Albert Morrow was one of a number of British poster artists coming to prominence during this period. Albert was one of four artist brothers (Edwin, George and Norman), all working in magazine, book or poster illustration.] I feel sure if you got an opening you would get on the permanent staff and hours and hours of the regular work. The business of the firm is extending to such an extent that new works are being erected at Harrow in addition to the Belfast ones.
>
> I hope that the 'event' will soon take place without any hitch – it is a most anxious time. With kind regards and good wishes to yourself and wife,
>
> I remain
>
> Yours sincerely,
>
> Maj. Gen. Moody

He adds as a postscript: 'A bold and racing style is what is required for their posters.'

The 'event' Moody referred to in the letter was the imminent arrival of John and Belle's first child. They had travelled in December to her parents' home in Helensburgh, where they would stay for Christmas and until the birth of the baby. No doubt the prospect of impending fatherhood was another reason Hassall was so keen to find more secure employment. What followed was a flurry of correspondence over the Christmas and New Year period of 1895–6. Only the letters from David Allen remain, but there is a sense of urgency and the impression that Hassall wanted to strike while the iron was hot. On 20 December, David Allen, who had obviously taken note of the Major General's recommendation, wrote to Hassall asking him to send examples of his work. The tone of the letter implies they were simply fulfilling a polite obligation in following up, and did not hold out much hope:

> Of course as you can easily understand, theatrical designing is a thing for which an artist requires almost a special training. What is principally required is boldness and breadth of treatment combined with originality of conception.

A further letter, from the London office and dated 30 December, was

The room leading to Hassall's studio was known as his 'poster room', where he would regularly pin up examples of his work. Most of the posters in this drawing by fellow Sketch Club member James Thorpe published in the *Tatler*, 25 July 1906, can be found elsewhere in this book.

Isabella Dingwall Hassall, known as Belle, pictured with the couple's first child, Dorothy Muriel, in 1896.

An unusual portrait of Hassall, probably with baby Ian, who was born in January 1899. Hassall records in his diary that Belle and he visited Fall the photographer where they were each photographed separately with the baby. Despite a career in which he was frequently busy, Hassall was an involved father, making regular reference to his children's characters and development in letters and diaries.

more encouraging. It refers to a letter from Hassall on the 23rd in which he had enclosed specimens, and consequently asks him to call on them when he is back in town as, 'we have no doubt we can put work your way if your terms are low'. Another letter, dated 7 January, this time from Sam Allen in Belfast to Major General Moody gave an update:

> I have heard from my brother in London with reference to the sample sketches of your friend Hassall and you will, I am sure be glad to know that he is rather pleased with them and consider they show a good deal of promise.
>
> Of course, it is only now and then that we require the services of an outside man, as we have a large staff of designers of our own in connection with our London offices. However, I have no doubt that if Mr Hassall's work proves satisfactory we will be able to make use of his services occasionally and once he has made a commencement with us it might possibly lead to more permanent employment, as we shall be requiring a large staff of artists for our new works at Harrow.

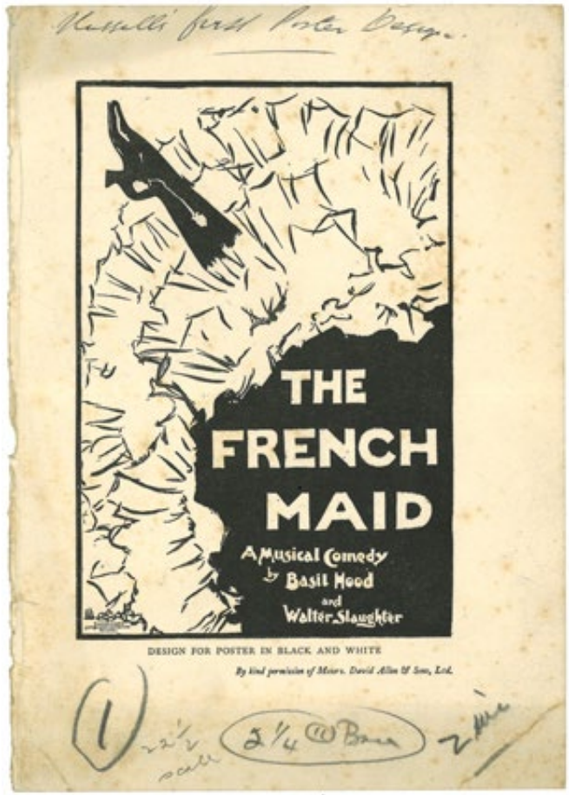
John and Belle's baby, a little girl, was born on 2 February 1896 and was named Dorothy Muriel, although was often known by her pet name of 'Doff'. When Hassall eventually made it to David Allen's offices for a meeting, they discussed a potential poster for the play *The French Maid*, and while ideas were being brainstormed, he asked for a pen and paper and quickly sketched a concept.

A profile of Hassall by Alys Eyre Macklin in *Pearson's* magazine of 1916, takes up the story:

> With a few quick strokes he drew the 'French Maid' just as she appeared afterwards on the hoardings, the dainty black foot and calf thrust upwards out of a froth of white frills, no body visible. Nothing of the kind had been done before; it was practically the inauguration of a new era in the world of pictorial advertisement, and he leapt into fame at once.

Hassall's design was simple, striking and instantly and recognisably embodied the spirit of the play. David Allen & Sons offered Hassall a deal. He would give priority to their poster commissions, working from his studio at home. They agreed that he could carry on with his magazine illustrations and other freelance commissions, providing they did not interfere with their requests and, in return, they paid him a salary and covered the rent on 88 Kensington Park Road. It gave Hassall a fixed, regular income and an element of job security, while still allowing him to take on other freelance work. Over the next seven years, while under contract to them, he would produce an estimated 600 posters.

Although *The French Maid* was the design that impressed David Allen & Sons, it was not the first poster by Hassall to appear on the hoardings. That was a design featuring the poet Robert Burns to advertise an exhibition in Glasgow, done with a simplicity that echoed the thick outlines and pared back aesthetic of the Beggarstaff Brothers. There are other influences apparent in his early posters. *The Shop Girl*, opened at the Gaiety Theatre at the end of 1894 and was a huge success, running for eighteen months. Hassall's poster for the production, which must have been designed in the latter part of the show's run, seems to fall in Chéret's and Dudley Hardy's slipstream, as the vivacious girl, encased in clouds of white skirts, emerges from a soft, almost impressionistic background. Posters for *The Daughters of Babylon* at the Lyric Theatre in 1897 and *The Greek Slave* at Daly's the following year, reflect elements of Mucha in the stately female figures and Art Nouveau detailing, yet the colouring and execution are more solid and insistent than the curvilinear romance of Mucha. Hassall, inevitably, was taking inspiration from other poster artists on his way to establishing his own unique approach.



Poster for *The French Maid*. Hassall's off-the-cuff sketch, done at the David Allen office, secured him a contract for the next seven years. The poster on the hoardings was also reproduced in yellow and black.

One of Hassall's most successful designs from that first year as a poster artist was for the production of *Newmarket*, a racing comedy, performed by Alexander Loftus's Musical Comedy Company at the Opéra Comique from August to October 1896. It depicted Poppy and her trainer; two figures against a flat background of green, with the only detail being the silhouette of horses on the horizon. It was widely praised for its simple composition, large areas of flat colour and strong figurative outlines, all elements that were becoming key ingredients in the typical Hassall poster. A.E. Johnson, Hassall's agent, considered *Newmarket* to be the poster that made his name, describing it as a perfect example of 'reduction to the simplest terms, but a reduction, so to speak, within reasonable limits: not carried, as was the habit of the Beggarstaff Brothers, to a point so far as to be beyond the grasp of the general public'. In fact, Hassall's original brief, given by the star of the show, the comedian Willie Edouin, was to paint a man in a long

A.E. Johnson, Hassall's agent and biographer, considered *Newmarket* (or *The Sporting Girl*) to be the poster that established him as a poster artist.

overcoat twiddling his watch chain, as this habit was part of Edouin's act. As he recalled in an article for the *Era* in 1917:

> … it is practically impossible to paint a man in a long overcoat twiddling his watch chain UNLESS he wears that watch chain outside the overcoat – which is absurd. For some days I did my best to get round the difficulty, but without success. And in the end, I suddenly decided that the only thing to do was to disobey instructions, and to paint out the hand and chain and all. Luckily for me, the thing made a big hit – but if I had been able to follow my own ideas from the start it would have been a better piece of work.

It would not be the last time Hassall went against the wishes of a client. He would often publicly grumble at the clash of opinions between artist and client, believing the conservative views of many hampered his creative efforts and the consequent effectiveness of the final design. *Newmarket* was just one example of where his maverick approach had been justified by the popular success of his finished design.

It was not long before his posters were beginning to attract the attention of the press. A reproduction of his poster for *The Little Genius* was published in the *Sketch* in November 1896, alongside another poster by Hardy, with both men's work used as examples of 'The Progress of the Poster'. And already in October that year, the *West End Review* had run a front page feature heralding, 'A New Designer of Posters':

> A new light has arisen in the poster-designing world. Mr. John Hassall is his name. He has not been engaged in the study of art more than four or five years – he is still in his twenties – and he received his first commission in the poster line less than six months ago. Yet to-day his work – and the very best work of its kind it is – occupies more space on the hoardings than that of any of his contemporaries, and his remarkable powers are the talk of all artists.

It was a glowing testimony and a very public expression of his arrival on the scene.

Hassall now had regular work pouring in from David Allen & Sons, while continuing to draw for the illustrated papers, and it was not long before – as he put it to a reporter from the *Globe* in a 1902 interview – 'the lynx-eyed advertising man spotted me, and brought me a request from Judson's of Moonlight soup fame'. Sadly, no examples of this first Hassall advertising poster survive, but shortly afterwards he was commissioned by Colman's of Norwich to design several posters for their products. The results, particularly a trio of designs for the company's famous mustard, remain some of the most memorable and received plaudits from art journalists. In the *Poster* magazine, in June 1898, S. Manors wrote of Hassall's first design, showing a maiden walking through a field of mustard flowers, 'For Colman's Mustard, Hassall has surpassed himself. The yellow patch can be seen at a great distance, yet the harmony is perfect, and the design most simple.' In the following month, another design, showing a prospector bound for Klondyke, Canada warming his hands over a camp-fire topped with a tin of Colman's mustard, was simply declared, 'immense'. A third, companion poster in 1899, showed the 'Return from Klondyke' and is perhaps the most striking, with its figure wrapped in a vivid yellow blanket soaking his weary feet in a bowl heated by the magic of Colman's.

Within two years of his meeting with David Allen & Sons, Hassall's designs were being used to promote not only plays, musicals and pantomimes but a whole host of other clients' products from the world of trade and commerce, including Mellin's Food, Liebig's Extract of Meat Company, Beeston Tyres, Nestlé's Milk, Royal Coffee and Royal Baking Powder. Work could be relentless but Hassall was quick and not afraid of hard graft. Keble Howard, writing in the *Sketch* in 1903, confirmed his seemingly infinite capacity for work:

Hassall's first poster design for Colman's Mustard, 1898. With its bold splash of vivid yellow, it stood out on the hoardings and was widely praised.

Caricature of Lord Kitchener, published in the *Sketch* magazine on 29 October 1902, one example of Hassall's remarkably speedy working methods. After sending a messenger boy to 88 Kensington Park Road, the editor was astonished to return from lunch and find the sketch already waiting on his desk.

I am interested to find, in the current number of *Men and Women*, an article by J.A. Hammerton, on my colleague, John Hassall. 'Between the designing of posters,' says Mr. Hammerton, 'children's picture-books and book-covers, supplying illustrations for most of our humorous writers, and his work on the *Sketch*, Mr. Hassall must be one of the busiest men in London.' It is true enough that Hassall is a very busy man, but, with all his application to business, he could never get through half the work he turns out were it not for the extraordinary speed at which as a rule, he can work. About a year ago, I remember, a messenger-boy was sent from the *Sketch* office to Hassall's studio with a note that read as follows: 'Please send, by return, cartoon of Kitchener.' 'By return', of course, the Editor meant to imply that the drawing should be in the office in the following morning. Judge of his surprise then, on returning from his hasty lunch to find the cartoon lying upon his desk! The invincible 'Jack' taking him literally, had detained the messenger-boy and knocked off the cartoon while he waited.

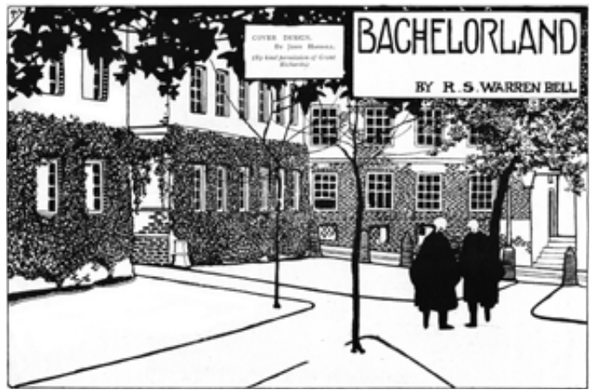
Hassall's output appears at times to have been superhuman, especially when his diaries reveal how he also led an active and varied social life. Take, for example, his diary entries for the first week of February 1898. On 2 February, Belle and he celebrated Dorothy's second birthday, and the following day they went together to the Royal Academy to see Millais's 'Ex' (presumably exhibition) and 'also Tissots'. Two days later he went to the fashionable Grafton Galleries, followed by 'lunch at Gatti's' and then paid a visit to a poster shop. In the evening, John went with his sister, Lily, to see Mrs Brown Potter as Charlotte Corday at the Adelphi Theatre. He frequently mentions 'going into the office' (probably to David Allen & Sons at Leicester Square) and, if he had the time, would drop off work at various publishers' offices, sometimes combining that with a meeting elsewhere. There were also frequent callers to 88 Kensington Park Road; either friends or family members, sometimes staying for tea or dinner. In addition, he also had journalists or clients visiting him in his studio. All the while, he was fulfilling a constant stream of commissions, as well as usually continuing to work on a larger painting, often in watercolour, to be exhibited at the RI. In the early months of 1898, it was a picture of the Pied Piper of Hamelin.

With increasing work, Hassall's network of acquaintances also began to expand and a number of important friendships were formed during this period. The world of the 'black and white' artists was tightknit and he would have had introductions either at David Allen's or at his agent, A.E. Johnson, or while visiting magazine offices. At some point Hassall was introduced to Dudley Hardy. David Cuppleditch, in his 1979 book, *The John Hassall Lifestyle*, suggests this was before Hassall embarked on his art studies, and claims it was Hardy who recommended he try the art school in Antwerp, though it is unclear exactly when or how this occurred. What we do know is that by 1898 Hassall was part of an artistic circle that included Hardy and other leading commercial artists, notably Tom Browne, Phil May, René Bull and Cecil Aldin. In the case of his relationship with Hardy and Aldin, they were not only personal friends, but they would collaborate on projects in their working lives as well. There was little professional jealousy. Each artist was successful enough, talented enough and work was plentiful enough to mean that competitiveness was hardly an issue. Hassall, in particular, was well-known for helping out artists in the early stages of their career, perhaps mindful of the kindness he himself experienced with the van Havermaets in Antwerp.

On 1 April 1898, Hassall was part of a group of artists who formed themselves into a new club. The London Sketch Club was mostly comprised of defectors from the Langham Sketching Club who left due to a difference of opinion over the catering available at the latter (they complained they wanted hot beef, when only bread and cheese was on offer). In an article about the club by Leonard Crocombe in 1928, he mentions Hassall as, 'the ringleader of those rebels', although, in fact, George Haité was the club's first President, with Dudley Hardy as Vice-President. Hassall himself would serve as President from 1903–04 and remained a key figure of the club until his death.

The club at first hired a room at the Modern Gallery at 175 Old Bond Street before finding a more permanent and more atmospheric venue at Wells Street, just behind Oxford Street. For an annual payment of two guineas, the London Sketch Club members met on Friday evenings, and would spend two hours from 7.00–9.00 pm working on a timed drawing, after which it would be 'Show's Up!' when the results were pinned on walls for a friendly critique by other members. There would be a hearty dinner, and afterwards drinks, smoking, lively conversation and 'songs warbled'. Unlike the staid clubs of St James's, the London Sketch Club cultivated an easy, bohemian atmosphere, increased further by the snug, nicotine-stained garret in Wells Street, which even boasted a Pickwickian fireplace and hearth designed by Aldin. Sadly, when the club moved again, to 246a Marylebone Road in 1913, the fireplace had to be left behind, but an original door from Newgate

Having acquired a level of fame himself, Hassall dabbled in celebrity endorsement with a series of advertisements for Swan Pens featuring a self-portrait of him scribbling away. This one was published in *Printers' Ink*, 1 June 1910.



Bachelorland by R S. Warren Bell, published by Grant Richards, 1899. Hassall's cover design was singled out for praise in the *Poster* magazine that year.

Prison to the new premises provided a quaint talking point. Furthermore, Hassall decided to light a fire in the middle of the room in order to blacken the walls, just how the members liked it. Like most clubs, its membership was exclusively male, with no women admitted – apart from the cook whose steak pies and sirloins were said to be almost as good as those at Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese on Fleet Street. 'The presence of the feminine element is at all times tabooed – not even wives or sweethearts are ever given a glimpse into the jollity of this gayest of all Bohemian clubs, and if you question a member on the point, he replies naively that there is not a hall in London large enough to accommodate the numbers they should feel obliged to ask, so they refrain from inviting any lest they offend the multitude.' Women were, however, invited to the club's annual exhibition, where members could submit up to four pictures, either timed sketches or a finished work in oils or watercolour, providing it did not exceed the size limit of 18 x 24 in. The Sketch Club's activities and ethos appealed greatly to Hassall. As a swift worker and full of ideas, he proved himself more than up to the challenge of the timed sketch each week.

'The two-hour sketches produced by Mr. John Hassall at the weekly gatherings of the members of the London Sketch Club, disarm antagonistic criticism by the excellence of their work… . He is almost alone amongst artists in not employing a model, and it speaks well for his Antwerp and Paris

Opposite:
Dudley Hardy (1867–1922) pictured in his studio at his home in Ravenscourt Park, London. One of the pioneers of the British poster art scene, he was best-known for his posters for the Gaiety Theatre, and his famous vivacious creation, 'The Yellow Girl' used on posters to advertise Jerome K. Jerome's *To-Day* magazine (he was once delighted to see a girl in London walking down the street in a replica of the 'Yellow Girl' outfit). Hardy's posters were an Anglicised riff on the French artist Chéret and, in turn, Hassall's early posters would mimic the vivacity of Hardy's work. The pair would become great friends, holidaying together and founding an art school. Unlike Hassall, who did not come from an artistic background, Hardy's father was Thomas Bush Hardy the marine painter, and his sister Florence was a successful illustrator, mainly designing whimsical postcards and Christmas cards.

Members of the London Sketch Club working on their timed sketches on a Friday evening. Hassall can be seen at the end of the table, intent on his drawing. Others in the photograph include Harry Rountree (standing on the right), William Heath Robinson (middle left) and Will True (standing at the back in the middle). In the foreground is Harold 'Pat' Earnshaw, who was married to fellow illustrator, Mabel Lucie Attwell. Pat is seen here drawing with his right hand. During the First World War, while serving in the Sussex Regiment, he lost the hand in a shell blast. While recuperating in hospital, he learnt to draw with his left and continued to have a career as an artist until his death in 1937.

training, and for the retentiveness of his memory,' wrote the *Poster* in its January 1900 issue, in an article devoted to Hassall's skill in this area.

The madcap antics, dressing up and 'spoof' theatricals also appealed to Hassall; he was renowned for donning one of his favourite costumes – that of a police officer – and alarming members and guests to the club as he stood at the darkened entrance of Wells Street, an imposing figure intent on vetting anyone wishing to pass. On another occasion, when the club was holding a 'Tramp Supper', Hassall disappeared, only to emerge in a medley of exotic garments, pretending to be a Russian peasant who had recently arrived in London and wandered in. Whether gabbling in a language of his own invention, or regaling members with an amusing after-dinner speech, he was a natural and quick-witted entertainer and born raconteur. The London Sketch Club allowed his latent showmanship to emerge but it was by no means the only club to which he was affiliated. A consummate clubman, he was a member, at one time or another, of the Authors' Club, the Odd Volumes Club, the Pen & Brush Lodge, Strand Club, Knights of the Round Table, the Bohemian Club, Cercle Français, Journalists Trust, the RI, the Graphic Arts Club and the Entre Nous Club. He was also a prominent member of the Savage Club, which he joined in 1906, famously designing their emblem in the form of the head of a Native American chief, a subject Hassall would adopt repeatedly in club menus and invitations. At a time when racial stereotyping was rife, the Native American theme seemed suitable for adoption by a club of 'savages'. However, the London Sketch Club felt like the one closest to his heart and where, above all, he found not only professional support and encouragement but kindred spirits in fellow members, as explained further in Crocombe's article:

> In a way, the sketch club idea keeps the men always students, each one being his neighbour's master, although his criticism takes merely the form of an exchange of courtesies. Every member takes a personal interest in every other man's work, sharing his proud moments and bemoaning his failures, for it all must reflect back to the common centre of interest – the club.

In 1898, Belle was pregnant with their second child and on 3 January 1899 Hassall recorded in his diary that he, 'went for Doctor Paul at 6 in morning. Laddie born about one o'clock. Sent letters, cards & wires ad lib.' The new baby was named Ian John Dingwall Hassall and immediately 'Dingwall' was voted in as a member of the London Sketch Club. Signing up a baby of a few days old was a typically silly club gesture, but it proved that among members their interest in each other extended beyond their art, and that family and friendship formed a bedrock of their community. Ian did, in fact, become an artist like his father and perhaps this early acceptance into the artistic brethren helped to foster his creative inclinations. A portrait of London Sketch Club members by Starr Wood from around 1900 shows each artist, including Tom Browne, Dudley Hardy and Phil May, standing in an orderly queue with George Haité at its head, animatedly waving his arms. Halfway along the line is John Hassall, holding Dingwall in his arms.

Another figure in the picture, standing behind Hassall, is Cecil Aldin, with a dog on a lead. Of the many friendships Hassall formed or strengthened at the club, the one between Aldin and him was one of the closest. Aldin was also making his mark with posters in the late 1890s and although not quite as prolific as Hassall he had designed a number of well-received examples for Cadbury and Colman's Blue, as well as for *Land and Water* magazine. The two men shared a similar style, employing thick outlines and an elegant balance of negative space, all the while pairing that with appealing characters and warm humour. They both enjoyed creating medieval characters, although Aldin's true love were the late Georgian and early Victorian eras, inspiring him to paint lively coaching scenes from those days or views of picturesque inns. He became known principally as a sporting artist of hunting scenes, and of dogs, the models for which were drawn from his own menagerie of canine companions, including a bull terrier called Cracker and an Irish Wolfhound called Mickey. Cecil Aldin, and his wife Rita, lived in Bedford Park in Chiswick, part of a fashionable artist's colony in

Programme cover for an Old Neuenheimers' Dinner, 1912, designed by Hassall, and featuring a young man inside a cabin, a scene undoubtedly drawing on his experiences as a pioneer farmer in Canada more than two decades earlier.

Key members of the London Sketch Club by Starr Wood. Hassall can be seen midway along the queue with baby Dingwall in his arms. Cecil Aldin stands behind him, while Phil May and Tom Browne are further to the front. His good friend Dudley Hardy stands second in line, as befits his role as Vice-President when the club was first formed.

IN FOCUS

JACK OF CLUBS

Hassall's lifelong interest in Native Americans found expression in the branding he himself designed for the Savage Club, and he frequently drew himself in feathered headdress. This image, however, is by Ian, whose invitation to a Savage Club dinner in 1935 depicts his father as a rather stern Native American chief.

Hassall, caricatured by Gerald Strickland in *Vanity Fair*, 1912, pictured as a Brother Savage. His solicitor, in a letter dated 25 August that year, regarding the lawsuit against Mr Brittain of the Fine Arts Publishing Company, asked, 'What is the meaning of the *Vanity Fair* cartoon? Did you have the Club to smite Britain?'

Naturally sociable, Hassall belonged to a number of artistic or so-called bohemian clubs during his lifetime and would come to be known as one of London's most consummate clubmen. Two in particular would figure largely in his life: the London Sketch Club and the Savage Club.

The Savage Club, founded in 1857, attracted a wide range of well-known members (known as Brother Savages) from literature, the arts and sciences, while its emblem, a Native American chief, was devised by Hassall. Members during Hassall's lifetime included the novelist G.A. Henty (whose book covers Hassall would illustrate), the composer Herman Finck, actor Henry Irving, cartoonist Phil May and many other fellow artists. The club also boasted a long association with royalty, having had successive Princes of Wales attend Savage Club dinners as guests of honour.

The London Sketch Club, of which Hassall had been a founder member, was formed in 1898, with its core activity a two-hour sketching session in the evening where members were encouraged to master spontaneous drawing or painting. Around this would be drinking, singing and a lively programme of entertainment events of which Hassall, known as one of the club's leading character actors, was usually at the centre.

Other than the summer months, when it had its recess, it was rare for Hassall's diaries not to contain some reference to visiting the club at least once a week, sometimes with a guest.

Hassall illustrated, or featured in, many club invitations and programmes through the years.

Hassall's design for the Savage Club's costume ball at the Royal Albert Hall, held in May 1919.

A Hassall design for a Savage Club dinner menu, 1913.

The artist's signature is illegible but this impression of Hassall, surrounded by advertising posters, suggests the peerless reputation he had for such work.

Hassall's impression of friends and fellow members at one of the London Sketch Club's infamous *conversaziones*, published in the *Sketch* on 19 November 1902. Hassall portrays himself in disguise, taking part in 'The Mango Trick' with René Bull and Dudley Hardy.

The famous silhouette frieze of London Sketch Club presidents, with Hassall apparently deep in conversation with an animated, cigar-smoking Phil May. The portraits were originally drawn on canvas from the members' candlelit shadows by Sandham (possibly the Canadian artist Henry Sandham, who moved to London in 1901) before being transferred to the walls. The frieze continued to extend with more portraits over the years, with Charles Robinson taking over the portraiture in the 1920s.

A joint design by Hassall and Dudley Hardy for the 1902 London Sketch Club Autumn Exhibition.

Another portrayal of Hassall as a Brother Savage, this time astride a bucking bronco, drawn by G.L. Stampa.

Cecil Aldin (1870–1935) caricatured by Hassall and published in the *Studio* in 1903. Aldin and Hassall collaborated on several projects, and the two families were good friends. Renowned for his canine and equine drawings, it was only natural to picture Aldin with a dog at his heel. However, this dog, a slightly scrawny white mongrel, is pure Hassall and frequently appeared in his pictures as a kind of personal mascot.

the area at the time. Hassall would regularly note in his diary that he had 'gone to see Aldin at 41 Priory Road', and there are many further entries recording Aldin's arrival at 88 Kensington Park Road. The two men worked together on a number of projects, including two of Hassall's first illustrated book commissions, *A Cockney in Arcadia* published by George Allen and *Two Well-Worn Shoe Stories*, which was published by Sands & Co., both in 1899. Hassall, for his part, contributed illustrations of 'There was an Old Woman Who Lived in a Shoe' while Aldin's half of the book was 'Cock-a-doodle-doo'. They would also collaborate on the *Happy Annual*, published by Heinemann in 1907, which was unusual in including advertisements designed by them as well as stories and illustrations.

Also successful was a range of nursery friezes and prints published by Lawrence and Bullen and sold through Liberty.

Life was busy, but also settled and happy for the Hassalls. Ian was christened on 2 February 1899 at St Peter's Church. A few days later, Aldin, along with his wife and son, Rufus, came to tea and to see the new baby (Rufus's real name was Dudley, whose pet name was given due to his red hair). That month Hassall continued to work on *Punch and Judy*, one of his large watercolours. He also attended the London Sketch Club where, he noted, 'Phil May in great form', finished a poster for *Saucy Sally* and completed another for *Little Red Riding Hood*, recording on the 20th that he finished painting in the poppies. He lunched with his sister Lily and on the 22nd went to see *The Belle of New York* at the Shaftesbury Theatre. On 25 February he went to the doctor, noting with satisfaction that he measured 5 ft 11½ in and weighed a trim 11 stone 5½ lbs. There are mentions of some of his most well-known posters, such as *The Only Way*, featuring Martin Harvey. Hassall went to see the play on 14 April 1899 and the following day wrote, 'Did Martin Harvey 6 sheet – guillotine scaffold.' Even when away from his studio, he ensured he could continue to work. During a visit to Helensburgh in July 1899, he still managed to complete a 6-sheet poster for Singer Sewing Machines, another for a soap flake company, as well as illustrations for *Indoors and Out*, published by Blackie & Son and a catalogue cover for the publisher as well. Despite the demands of his work, he was a devoted and attentive father. Frequently he took Dorothy, aged only three, out with him on errands around town, either into the office, to the bank or to shops. On 23 December 1899, he let her put crackers on the Christmas tree, while later that evening he and Belle, who was by this time pregnant with their third child, stayed up making Christmas cards. Whether by coincidence or design, fatherhood coincided with Hassall beginning to draw more illustrations for children. There was his book collaboration with Aldin, the first of hundreds of children's books he would illustrate and that December he had contributed pictures to *The Child's Exhibition* at the Fine Art Society in New Bond Street, along with Aldin, Hardy, Browne, F. Newton Shepard and a French female artist, A. Rasponi. The *Morning Post* singled out John's 'gaily-tinted drawings called after the months and meant to describe sports suitable to each particular section of the year' as being the most noteworthy.

With such a hectic schedule, there was little time for illness, but it was sometimes inevitable. Occasionally, work was halted by periods of toothache and neuralgia so severe Hassall found it hard to concentrate on anything. At other times, illnesses spread through the whole family. In March 1899, he was in bed with a cold, but was well enough the following day to do some modelling when a parcel containing plasticine arrived. Then Dorothy caught his cold, followed by Belle, who was diagnosed with influenza, with the result that baby Ian had to be given a bottle. On 16 March, Hassall writes, 'Baby bad' and records that the doctor was called twice, but on the next day his diary entry reads, 'baby better', clearly a relief in an age before antibiotics, when it was not uncommon for a cold to develop into something fatal. Although everyone's health was a priority, it must have been frustrating for Hassall to lose precious time with illness, especially when he had a bulging order book of commissions, including the usual ongoing projects for David Allen & Sons. Hassall's business relationships often developed

Hassall's contribution to the *Sketch* magazine's Coronation Number in 1902 was this cartoon depicting visitors to London in the form of well-known poster characters, the majority of whom were his own creation. Among the spectators are his Colman's Mustard maiden, Little Red Riding Hood and Martin Harvey in *The Only Way*. He also pays tribute to Dudley Hardy's 'The Yellow Girl' and the Beefeater from the Beggarstaff Brothers' *Harper's* magazine poster, as well as the eighteenth-century character from their Rowntree's Elect Cocoa design. It is an amusing concept but also a clear indicator of how instantly recognisable these characters were to the Edwardian public.

Hassall at work in his studio in the 1890s. The room was much remarked upon and even in this picture, the exotic textiles and furniture, as well as unusual souvenirs brought back for him by his brother Owen conjure a bohemian atmosphere. Another poster for *Newmarket*, an alternative to the one on page 42, can be seen on one wall.

into friendships and this was the case with the Allen brothers. As their star artist, Hassall was a regular guest at dinner parties at Willie Allen's elegant Nash house at 12 Sussex Gardens, Regent's Park. However, a terse letter from Willie, from February 1900, suggests Hassall was spreading himself thinly and falling behind with his poster obligations:

> 21st February 1900
> Both my brothers and I have been greatly dissatisfied for a long time back with the quantity of work you are turning out for us. What with the rent of your house and your salary we are paying you about £10 per week, and when we consented to you doing Press work, the understanding was that it would not in any way interfere with us, and would represent more or less overtime: in other words that you would give us a fair day's work for a fair day's pay. I consider the present arrangement most unsatisfactory, as we cannot afford to pay anything like the figure that your sketches are now costing us. Times are very bad, and it is necessary for us to economise in every way possible to make ends meet.

We do not know what Hassall's response to this was but some resolution must have been found. He continued to honour his arrangement with David Allen & Sons, but would have been mindful that keeping on top of his poster commissions was a priority.

John and Belle's baby was due in late spring, and all seemed well. Despite her pregnancy, Belle was as active as usual, accompanying John on theatre trips, going out with his mother to the London Sketch Club show in March, dining at the Aldins in Bedford Park and enjoying a night out with her husband at Frascati's on Oxford Street on 16 April 1900, after which they made their way home on the bus. In March there had been some sad news. John's sister, Connie, who had married Leander Miller at St Peter's in 1899, had given birth to a son who died two days later. Such tragedies were unfortunately not uncommon.

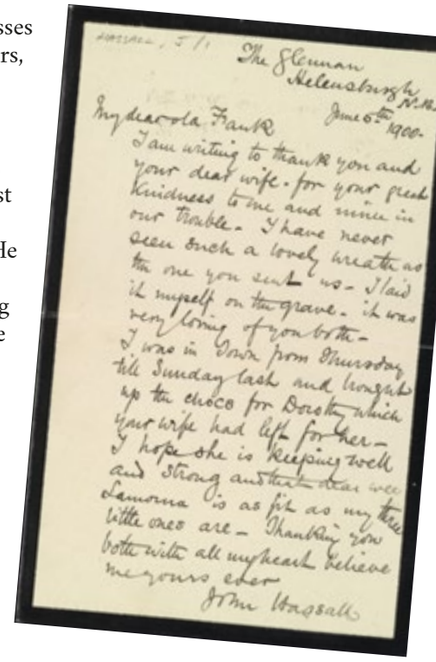
At the end of April 1900, bad colds once again swept through the Hassall household. On 26 April, Hassall wrote, 'Belle, Ian, Dorothy, Emily [one of the servants] all cram full of sneezes, coughs and gurgles.' Three days later: 'everyone still sneezing'. We assume that everyone recovered, and Hassall continued to work around the daily domestics of the household.

On 14 May 1900, he spent the day working on a painting entitled *Fix Bayonets*, remarking that he 'nearly got them all drawn in' (the painting would later be part of an exhibition of Boer War art at the Continental Gallery in November). In the evening he went with his brother Owen and Bill (probably his half-brother, William Wright) to the Tivoli. It was a typical day, combining work with play, which makes the diary entry for the following day such a stark, shocking contrast:

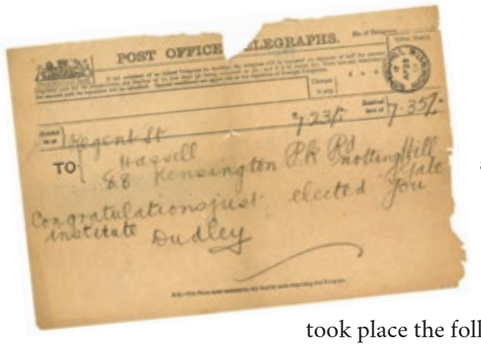
> Belle taken ill, birth of little girl at about 2; died about 5 o'clock.
> Dr Blackes, 11 Wimpole Street.

Belle was dead at the age of just thirty-four. It must have been devastating, and for a man so positive, energetic and with such an appetite for life, the loss of his wife feels even more poignant. The following day Hassall recorded in his diary that W.P.W and he went into town, visiting various businesses including Bemrose the printers, the bank and the publisher Sands & Co., presumably to tie up business before taking some necessary time off. Mrs Jack (possibly the wife of artist Richard Jack) and Hal Hurst, another artist friend, called. He ordered black for mourning and his bewilderment at being thrust so suddenly into a state of grief is summed up in one single, heart-breaking line: 'Cannot express self.'

It was up to him to register the birth of 'wee Isabel' and to quickly make


The Glenman
Helensburgh N.B.
June 6th 1900.
My dear old Frank
I am writing to thank you and your dear wife for your great kindness to me and mine in our trouble. I have never seen such a lovely wreath as the one you sent. We laid it myself on the grave. It was very loving of you both.
I was in bed from Thursday till Sunday last and brought up the choco for Dorothy which your wife had left for her. I hope she is keeping well and strong and that dear wee Ramona is as fit as my three little ones are. Thanking you both with all my heart believe me yours ever
John Hassall

Letter from Hassall, with black edging denoting the sender is in mourning, just two and a half weeks after the death of Belle. He thanks a friend called Frank for sending a wreath and chocolates for Dorothy. Hassall's correspondence to friends and acquaintances always reveals him to be courteous and polite.


POST OFFICE TELEGRAPHS.

TO Hassall
88 Kensington P.R. Nottinghill Gate
Congratulations just elected
Institute Dudley

Telegram of congratulations from Hardy to Hassall in 1901, informing him he had been elected a member of the RI.

arrangements for Belle's funeral in Helensburgh. They travelled up there on 17 April and the funeral took place the following day. There is no entry in his diary that day, save for one word: 'Inexpressible'.

John Hassall was now a widower with three small children, one of whom was a newborn, and another just fifteen months old. The first year following Belle's death must have been difficult but he was at least lucky to be in a position to have servants, and family rallied around to help. Isabel, writing memories of her childhood in 1928, said she believed she and her siblings stayed at The Glennan, Helensburgh for a while with their Scottish grandparents. Hassall returned to London and by the 20th had resumed work, with a story book to complete for Blackie & Son, and another title, *Our Darling's First Book*. Book publishers continued to approach him. In 1899, he had completed *An Active Army Alphabet*, a humorous take on the war in South Africa. This was followed by *A Naval ABC* and then, *The Pantomime ABC*. Also, in 1900, his first designs with Cecil Aldin for nursery friezes and pictures were exhibited as room sets at Earl's Court in September 1900. We can only assume that these projects came as a welcome distraction. A telegram of congratulations from Dudley Hardy on 29 April the following year, confirming he had been elected a member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour, must have given him some cause to feel positive.

The 1901 census, coming ten months after Belle's death, lists the occupants of 88 Kensington Park Road as John, Dorothy aged five, two-year-old Ian, and baby Isabel, as well as his sister Constance, and Isabelle's younger sister, Mary Dingwall, both who stayed with him occasionally to help out. There were also six servants: Kate, the children's nanny, as well as Minnie (possibly a nursemaid, since sometimes she took the children out), Emily, Florence, Rose and Henry. In between work, Hassall spent time with his children when he could. By this time, with his celebrity established, he was in demand as an interviewee and it is interesting to note that several published interviews in periodicals at this time are accompanied by photographs of him with his children. 'Dads' or 'Dadda' did not keep his children in the background. In common with parents of the time, their day-to-day care was managed by their nanny Kate, but John clearly delighted in their company. In the summer, he took them away on holiday to France, staying at Ambleteuse in Normandy with Dudley Hardy and another artist friend, Ellis Silas. There are references to shopping trips with Dorothy, on one occasion taking her to Kensington High Street 'to get three books for sticking reproductions in'. He took Ian and her to see the Lord Mayor's Show in November 1901 and on Christmas Day that year they had 'a party downstairs, Xmas tree and hundreds of toys'. Each Easter, he would go to Whiteley's department store nearby to buy the children's Easter eggs. At the Royal Academy in 1901, Charles van Havermaet had submitted a portrait of his friend's two eldest children, showing Dorothy, dressed in black, and Ian, chubby-cheeked and seated on a high chair. *The Art Record*, in its review of the exhibition, singled out the picture as, 'wonderfully well-drawn and painted in a most restrained and simple manner. Despite the spirited look and apparent well-being of the children, there is a low toned-sombreness in the colouring which amounts almost to sadness, so that the spectator almost divines that the little ones are motherless.' They were, indeed, motherless, but despite such a tragedy marking their early years, they seem otherwise to have had a secure and happy childhood.

In February 1903, Hassall met Constance Maud Brooke Webb, the daughter of the Reverend Albert Brooke Webb of Dallinghoo Rectory in Suffolk. The exact circumstances of how Maud came into Hassall's orbit are unclear. One story claims she came to London to see the Trooping of the Colour, got lost and was rescued by General Sir William Purvis Wright. This may be true, as she seemed to have made a friend of Maimie Wright. Maimie, in one newspaper report, is referred to as Hassall's step-sister, but Sir William had not been previously married; in fact, she was one of Hassall's half-siblings, Victoria Mary (the others being Helen and William or 'Bill').

A diary entry on 13 February mentions that Maimie brought Miss Maud Webb to Hassall's studio, where she helped out by colouring in the red lettering on a poster he was working on for Cailler chocolate. On 4 April, out to impress, Hassall took Maimie and Maud to see *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show* at Olympia. With friends in high places, Hassall had a pass from Colonel Cody (Buffalo Bill) himself and was able to seat himself and the ladies in Dudley Hardy's box. By 9 April he had proposed to Constance and a date was set – 3 September – for their wedding.

The marriage of Mr John Hassall RI and Miss Constance Maud Brooke Webb attracted a fair amount of interest in the press, and the wedding itself was a grand affair for the village of Dallinghoo. A triumphal arch had been erected over the road near the church, with the mottos 'Health and Prosperity' on one side and 'Long Life and Happiness' on the other. Another, at the entrance to the rectory, offered 'Dallinghoo's Best Wishes' and 'God Bless the Bride and Bridegroom'. Hassall's entry in his diary on that day is chipper:

> The Day (he had circled the date in blue pencil)
> Glorious blue sky. Owen and I walked after breakfast to Rectory. All flags flying & festoons & garlanded poles. Arranged presents in drawing room.
> 2.25 Maud arrived at church.

Maud wore a dress of ivory satin with a deep flounce of Limerick lace,

The Children of John Hassall by Charles van Havermaet, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1901. '... the spectator almost divines that the little ones are motherless'.

Hassall with Dorothy, Ian and Isabel in March 1903, three years after the death of Belle. This picture was published in a profile in the *Sketch*.

The wedding of John and Maud on 3 September 1903, with family assembled outside Dallinghoo Rectory. John's brother, Owen, is on the far right, next to Maud's brother, Martin Brooke Webb. His mother is seen to the left of John and William Purvis Wright (W.P.W.) is just to the left of the doorway. Owen would himself get married the following September, to Bessie Cory, the daughter of Richard Cory, of an established Devon shipping firm.

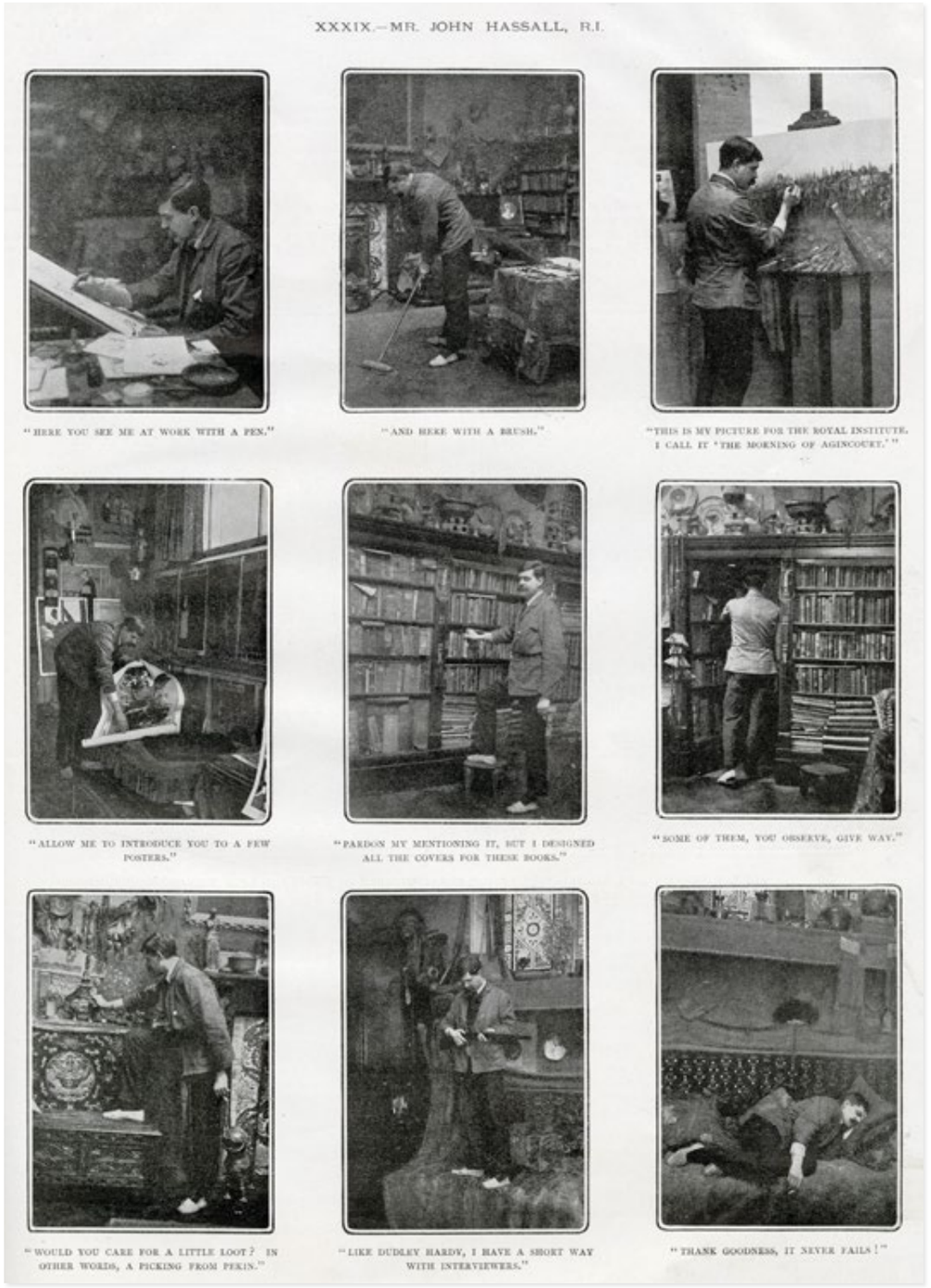
a Brussels lace veil and wreath of orange blossom. The bridesmaids, including Maud's sister, Muriel, and Maimie, wore fashionable pale green accordion-pleated dresses of Liberty silk. Maud's father officiated at the ceremony, assisted by the Rev. F.D. Hodgson, the husband of Hassall's eldest sister Margaret, and Maud's brother Vernon gave her away. Afterwards, the wedding guests, which included Hassall's friend René Bull, congregated on the picturesque lawns of the rectory for photographs. As a wedding gift, John gave Maud a fitted dressing case, a gold watch, a pearl necklace, lace handkerchiefs and a silver clock. She reciprocated with a travelling clock. Miss Dorothy Hassall (though absent) was reported to have given a gift of a china figurine. Later, they departed from Woodbridge station, bound for a honeymoon in the New Forest, via a brief stop in London for Hassall to collect letters, attend to business matters and get a haircut. They stayed at Yew Tree Cottage in Bank in the heart of the New Forest, sending a joint letter back home to Maud's family. Hassall's contribution was a naturally witty, tongue-in-cheek account of their first shopping trip together in Lyndhurst and mentions affectionately how Maud asked what tea he preferred in front of the grocer, therefore, 'giving the game away'. Maud, taking up the story, obviously already had the measure of her mischievous new husband, and instructed everyone to ignore his tale about her confusion in the butcher's shop.

The children did not attend the wedding. Instead, according to Isabel, 'Granny Loo' (John's mother), had taken a girls' school at Southwold for the summer so the children stayed there with their nanny Kate, enjoying a seaside holiday. Maud returned to London to a new home and a readymade family. Isabel remembered hiding from her future new mother one day when she came to visit them in the nursery by putting her head between her knees, but the transition seems to have been smooth. Maud would become 'Mums' and appears to have been a kind and caring step-mother. She was a keen photographer and it is due to her in part that her step-children's childhood was documented so regularly. A browse through the family albums in the Hassall archives at the University of Essex is to be transported back to an idyllic Edwardian childhood: summer holidays in Sheringham, Runton and Worthing with 'Dads' often posing in his striped Captain Webb swimsuit; pictures of them riding in donkey carts, building architectural marvels in sand on the beach, and being carried aloft on the strong shoulders of their father or Uncle Owen. Maud is there, too, in her voluminous bathing costume. It is good to see the family content after the tragedy of Belle's death. The arrival of baby Joan in 1906 and Christopher in 1912 completed the family. The children spent some holidays at Dallinghoo, where the gardens offered endless opportunities for adventure. There was a pony to ride, fruit trees to plunder and a pug called Boggums who joined them in their games.

Away from family life, this first decade of the new century saw Hassall established as the country's leading commercial artist and illustrator, not only for posters but for book and magazine illustration and all manner of printed matter. From music sheet covers to children's painting books, advertising inserts to fundraising posters, John Hassall was the man to call on. In 1907, a meeting of Morecambe Town Council announced that as part of their plans to improve and beautify the town it had decided to issue a poster designed by Mr John Hassall. Rather than questioning the cost or asking to see the design, the mayor

'My dearest darlingest wife.' Constance Maud Brooke Webb, Hassall's second wife, was the mother of Joan and Christopher Hassall. In an interview with Bevis Hillier in 1968, Joan Hassall felt her parents' marriage was unhappy due to her father's tendency to drink. Undoubtedly they were different personalities; he a social animal with a fondness for jokes, she the prim vicar's daughter, but their letters to each other seem to express a deep and long-standing affection.

Left:
Rough sketch by John of Dorothy ('Doff') and Ian riding ponies, possibly at Dallinghoo.


XXXIX.—MR. JOHN HASSALL, R.I.

"HERE YOU SEE ME AT WORK WITH A PEN."

"AND HERE WITH A BRUSH."

"THIS IS MY PICTURE FOR THE ROYAL INSTITUTE. I CALL IT 'THE MORNING OF AGINCOURT.'"

"ALLOW ME TO INTRODUCE YOU TO A FEW POSTERS."

"PARDON MY MENTIONING IT, BUT I DESIGNED ALL THE COVERS FOR THESE BOOKS."

"SOME OF THEM, YOU OBSERVE, GIVE WAY."

"WOULD YOU CARE FOR A LITTLE LOOT? IN OTHER WORDS, A PICKING FROM PEKIN."

"LIKE DUDLEY HARDY, I HAVE A SHORT WAY WITH INTERVIEWERS."

"THANK GOODNESS, IT NEVER FAILS!"

simply congratulated the council, 'on securing the work of so celebrated an artist'.

In 1908, Hassall designed two of his most famous posters. One was commissioned by Frank Pick, the publicity manager for London Transport, who selected John to design the network's very first pictorial poster: *No Need to Ask a P'liceman!* The other was a design with which Hassall would forever be associated, *Skegness is SO Bracing*, featuring the famous Jolly Fisherman. The poster was an instant hit and Skegness town would directly attribute its healthy revival as a seaside resort to Hassall's evergreen design, which was re-worked a number of years later to include the town's pier.

Hassall was always full of plans and plots for new ventures, and in 1906 joined Dudley Hardy to open his own school of art in west London. The New Art School, at 3 Logan Place, Earl's Court, placed emphasis on poster design and black and white work, as well as other avenues of commercial art such as wallpaper friezes and fashion plates. The fees, set to attract students who were serious about their training, were 25 guineas a year; or slightly higher if paid for by week, month or term. With contacts among printers and advertising agents, the school also offered to help students to gain commissions, taking just a shilling in every pound earned to cover the transactions.

The school's day ran from 10.00 am–6.00 pm, with breaks for lunch and tea. The mornings were devoted to life drawing from a model, using charcoal. Every Monday a new model would assume a new pose, but throughout the week students were expected to work and improve on the same drawing, only starting again with the permission of the tutor. Each Wednesday morning there would be a change of pace, when the model would assume a different pose every half hour, for an exercise in mastering the 'lightning sketch'. In the afternoon, students were allowed to work on their own projects under supervision. Hassall visited the school three afternoons a week, giving encouragement and advice, and setting any struggling student the task of copying a plaster cast hand, adamant that once one could draw a hand, they could draw anything (he himself admitted in interviews that it was one thing he found difficult). As well as Hardy, Hassall brought in Richard Jack to teach. Sunderland-born Jack had begun his career as a black and white artist on magazines such as *Cassell's*, but would eventually become Canada's first official war artist and was elected to the Royal Academy in 1920. This wide span of skill and experience made him the ideal teacher for the school. A.C.M. Horne, known for his work in the *Sketch* and *Tatler* was another tutor, while Francklyn Helmore taught the anatomical aspects, considered essential regardless of what artistic discipline a student hoped to follow. He also managed the running of the school. Helmore's wife acted as secretary and painted in class alongside students, ready to help

The New Art School calendar for 1908, featuring the small artist in the big hat sitting on a high stool. The character would feature on the school's prospectus as well.

Opposite:
Part of a long-running series in the *Sketch*, in 1903 Hassall became the subject of one of its photographic interviews. The pictures show views of his studio, including some of the exotic objects that contributed to its unique appearance. Also shown is his bookcase with the secret doorway concealed by trompe l'oeil bookshelves.

Hassall assessing a student's work. H.M. Bateman, who was a pupil at the school in 1904, recalled in his autobiography, *By Himself*: 'Hassall was one the most good natured of men, especially to youngsters like myself, warming themselves in the radiance he threw out and ready to help with any little job he might want doing to make his work go quicker and easier. His energy and output at that time was really amazing.'

out with lettering on posters and cover designs. Charles van Havermaet would also teach at the school of his former protégé during his time in London, as did the society painter, Philip de Laszlo.

The premises boasted a spacious, airy studio and a uniform in the form of regulation green linen aprons for the female students. Aside from stools and easels, the room was enlivened by a tapestry, which hung as an exotic backdrop to the life models, while a large-scale model of an old ship, displayed on one wall, had once belonged to Hardy's father, the marine painter Thomas B. Hardy. Once a month, visitors were encouraged to attend tea parties given by staff and students, and as a marketing ploy the school held an annual poster competition for all-comers. The cash prizes on offer were not enough to tempt professionals but entrants could instead win an alternative prize of one, two or three months' free tutoring at the school. Considering the entries were judged by three of the country's finest poster artists – Cecil Aldin, Tom Browne and John Hassall, as well as Charles Holme, editor of the *Studio* – to win would have been a prestigious achievement for any prospective student. The John Hassall school soon built up a proven track record in turning out some very successful students.

H.M. Bateman, whose work for *Punch* and his withering cartoons lampooning high society in the *Tatler* during the 1920s and 1930s, had studied principally under Charles van Havermaet in his studio, but is likely to have spent time at the school, especially as Hassall recommended him to van Havermaet in the first place. Annie Fish was another alumni, who went on to illustrate the 'Letters of Eve' column in wartime issues of *Tatler* and to design a succession of witty Art Deco covers for *Vanity Fair* magazine in America. There was also Bruce Bairnsfather, whose cartoons of trench life in the *Bystander* brought him global fame during the First World War. Some even suggested that his walrus-moustachioed central character, a curmudgeonly soldier called Old Bill, was inspired by Hassall. Joan Hassall recalled that in later life her father commented that Bateman and Bairnsfather were the only two pupils from his school to enjoy long-term successful careers. This was untrue. There was the aforementioned Annie Fish, not to mention Gladys Peto, Bert Thomas and A.R. Thomson (who was deaf; Hassall helped him get his first commission with a whisky company). The Australian artist Hilda Rix Nicholson had also spent time at the New Art School during a trip to Europe in 1907. Hassall had seen potential, and always generous and encouraging, told her she was already better at drawing than he was. However, even if Bateman and Bairnsfather had been the only ones, as two of the most famous cartoonists of the twentieth century they alone proved the school was able to nurture quality talent.

Bairnsfather was taught principally by Charles van Havermaet, who took on much more of the day-to-day teaching than Hassall or Hardy. He took an interest in the shy young man who had given up an army career to follow his dream as an artist, and would, as he had with Hassall, form a firm friendship with his pupil. When Bairnsfather was attending the school in 1908, it had two separate studios for men and women, in different locations. This had been common practice since the art education boom of the late nineteenth century when many art schools opened up to women, but taught men and women separately on the grounds of propriety. The female students were based at Logan Place, whereas the men's studio was located nearby at 3 Pembroke Walk, close enough, if required, for a teacher to move between the two during the day. The school would later merge with Frank Brangwyn's art school and move to Stratford Studios in the same Earl's Court area, under the name of the London School of Art.

Bairnsfather recalled his experiences of the school in his autobiography *Wide Canvas*, published in 1939, in an account that also gives a sense of Hassall's celebrity status at the time:

> Hour after hour, and day after day, we struggled with charcoal sketches of models, both live and still, and discovered how bad our work was, when Van Havermaet came round to criticize and help. Hassall and Dudley Hardy were both great stars as poster artists at this period, and their work seemed to illuminate and glorify every hoarding. To me they appeared like some unapproachable artistic Titans .... I remember Hassall once coming to the school to look things over and staring at him as if I had seen the Indian rope-trick. These men seemed grander and more adorable to me than any statesman. I felt it was totally impossible for me to ever achieve such fame as they owned in my eyes.

Bairnsfather is unlikely to have been the only one star-struck by the school's principals, and the prospect of training at a school run by John Hassall attracted a steady stream of pupils. Some of the pupils themselves were well-known. Robert Baden-Powell, who was a friend of Hassall's and occasionally attended the London Sketch Club, studied there for a time. By lending his name to the school but assembling a teaching staff to take the majority of classes, Hassall was left free to manage his own workload, which showed no signs of slowing down. While he was naturally driven and self-disciplined, occasionally there are hints that he might have welcomed a break. In 1909, *Pearson's Weekly* magazine asked a number of well-known figures what they would like for Christmas. Hassall's desire was simple. 'I think a nice six months spent in some comfortable gaol would be as welcome as anything I can imagine,' was his good-humoured reply.

With many hours spent in his studio, over the years Hassall gave the space his own personal stamp,

Hassall at his art school, c. 1907 with female students seen in the background. The photograph is signed to 'Connie', quite possibly one of his sisters.

Book jacket design by Hassall for, *Advertising & British Art* by Walter Shaw Sparrow (John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1924). His depiction of a woman at the easel reflects the large contingent of female students at his art school. He was without a doubt a champion of women as professional artists and designers, including his own daughter Joan.

Hassall's interest in prehistoric flints extended into cave archaeology and after visiting Wookey Hole in the Mendip Hills, provided illustrations to a book on the subject by Herbert E. Balch (Oxford University Press, 1914), who had explored and mapped the caves. The pictures Hassall provided were also published as postcards. On 25 November 1915, Hassall noted in his diary that he went to the Holborn restaurant to hear Balch's lecture on the subject, illustrated with his pictures.

and few who entered failed to remark on its eccentricities. Dominating the room was a huge, Elizabethan four-poster bed, a resting place for many a friend or club member who might have imbibed too many tankards of beer at the London Sketch Club. Then there was a higgledy-piggledy bookcase, which, on closer inspection, turned out to be a secret doorway disguised by trompe l'oeil bookshelves holding books with titles such as *Bac to Biz*. Past posters were pinned across the doorway to the studio and often on walls up to the high ceiling. After the war, a large expanse of one wall was populated with hundreds of little flags, most purchased for charity on the numerous flag days held to raise funds. Most unusual were the countless exotic objects and curios from around the world. Hassall explained in his interview given to the *Captain* magazine that many had been brought back to him by his brother Owen, who, as an officer in the Cheshire Regiment (he would rise to the rank of colonel) had travelled extensively on military campaigns:

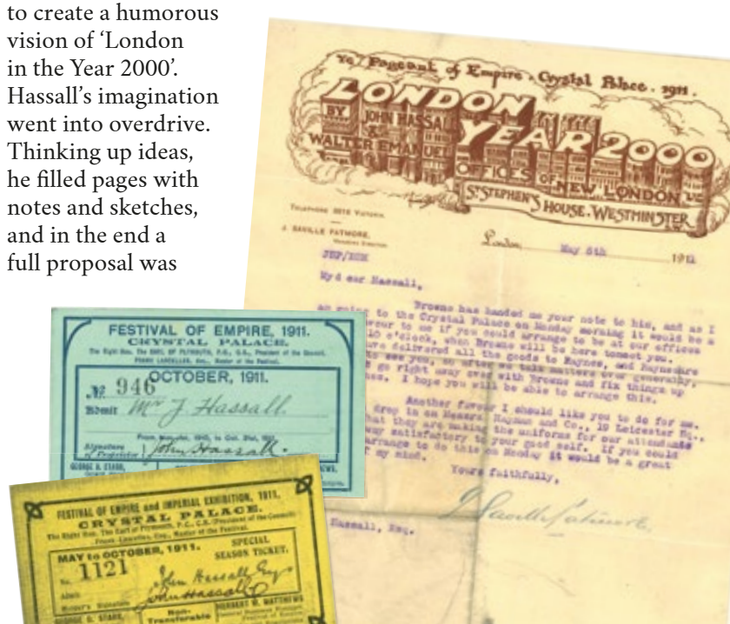
> He has been up the Niger, and I don't know where else. He brings back a miniature British Museum every time he comes home, and he piles it all upon me. Here is a leather apron worn by one of Lobengula's wives, for my brother was in the Matabele campaign. This hat went through the Jameson Raid. There are a pair of leather unmentionables which once adorned the lower limbs of one of Khama's warriors.

The brothers had grown up in the era of British Imperialism and for Hassall, who never experienced military service like his brother, father or step-father, the notion of adventures in far-off lands captured his imagination. We see this in some of his work, such as the covers he designed for G.A. Henty's adventure stories, or scenes of Native Americans inspired by his time in Canada. Even his contribution to Robert Baden-Powell's Boy Scout movement (he suggested the name and would design the cover for the movement's magazine, *Scouting for Boys*), stemmed from his taste for outdoor adventure and learning practical skills. He was also fascinated by archaeology and the Neolithic period, and was one of the first people to visit Wookey Hole in the Mendips, later illustrating a book on the subject in 1914.

Collecting flints became Hassall's hobby, and most of those he found were around Walton-on-the-Naze on the Essex coast, where, from 1908, he and the family would spend their annual summer holidays. They rented a house, 3a East Terrace, which was so close to the sea it was not unusual for the water to sometimes come right up to the front garden. The Hassalls became friendly with the family in the house next door, the Voelkers, and the children would play with each other on the beach. John still worked while away in Walton-on-the-Naze, but he was free of any other commitments, and when not helping the children build sandcastles, he would go off on his own or with Ian to hunt for flints. The collection he eventually amassed was so significant that he donated it to the University of Cambridge. His request that when he died he wished to be buried with a flint in each hand was given in the hope that it would confuse any archaeologists who dug him up in the future. Walton-on-the-Naze became a second home for the Hassall family; by the 1920s they rented numbers 4 and 5 Creek Cottages, and much of John's business was conducted from there. His connection to the town was further sealed by a poster he designed in 1924, depicting a small girl in a large sun bonnet surveying the town's golden sands. The image could easily have been taken from life.

As the Edwardian era flickered to a close, Hassall was affected by the deaths of two people close to him. His friend Tom Browne, who together with himself and Cecil Aldin had pioneered the bold, flat British poster style, died of throat cancer in March at the age of just thirty-eight. Nobody had known how dangerously ill he was. And on 30 April 1910, his step-father, General Sir William Purvis Wright, died suddenly at his home in Ladbroke Square of a heart attack. Sir William had been a kind and supportive father figure in Hassall's life. He had tried to intervene over the failure in the Sandhurst entrance exams (to no avail), had supported his choice to study art, been on hand to help after the death of Belle, and had even played a part in introducing him to Maud. W.P.W was a sad loss. Hassall's mother, Lady Wright, was too unwell to attend the coroner's inquest and so it was John who appeared to give evidence of identification. Granny Loo, having borne nine children and outlived two husbands, lived until 1932, reaching the grand old age of ninety-two.

Hassall's 'ABC' series was reprised and he started work at the end of 1910 on *A Coronation ABC*, written by Duncan Tovey and published by Lawrence and Bullen, the publication of which was planned to coincide with the coronation of King George V in June 1911. One of the highlights of the coronation year was the Festival of Empire, held at Crystal Palace. The exhibition displayed items from around the empire, housed in smaller recreations of parliament buildings from each country. However, there was also an area given over to a rather unusual concept – the future. Hassall had joined forces with Walter Emanuel, a writer with whom he had collaborated on a number of books, to create a humorous vision of 'London in the Year 2000'. Hassall's imagination went into overdrive. Thinking up ideas, he filled pages with notes and sketches, and in the end a full proposal was



Season tickets and business stationery relating to the Festival of Empire exhibition at Crystal Palace, 1911. Hassall collaborated with Walter Emanuel on the exhibit, 'London in the Year 2000'. Although the concept was comic, it was intended as a serious business proposal and hoped to capitalise on the thousands of visitors to London in coronation year.

Hassall at work on his two-hour drawing at the London Sketch Club in 1927.

Hassall (top) and Dudley Hardy in a pair of seaside pier photographs that sum up their playfulness and camaraderie.

put together describing exhibits such as 'A Registry Office for Paid Guests (formerly called servants)', 'The Notoriety Music Hall' and the 'Home for Disused Monarchs' (an idea that turned out to be prophetic much sooner than anticipated). There were spoof advertisements and shops selling 'the latest designs in Pets, e.g., Hippomouse, Camelphant' or another, or The Air Box Company, selling 'boxes of ozone from Margate, Brighton, Torquay and other sea-side resorts delivered daily'. Despite the rather eccentric array of ideas on show, the project was a serious business proposition. A company was set up, with offices at St Stephen's House in Westminster, a managing director to oversee everything and company stationery with the letterhead bearing a design by Hassall. A report by Charles Murray, who had previously been a manager at Coney Island and Luna Park in New York, estimated that takings on the 'Year 2000' exhibit over the four months that the festival was in progress would be £29,500. We do not know if that estimated figure was reached.

The Festival of Empire was just one of several projects during this period which allowed Hassall to experiment with applications of his art and his talent for original idea.

In 1912, he became a director in a creative capacity, of the Animated Hoardings Company, which aimed to introduce the novel concept of a mechanised poster, or, as the company's literature stated, 'Posters Animated with Life-Like Movements'. The first example, an advertisement for Bovril, appeared above Spagnoletti's at 11 Hanway Place, just behind the Oxford Music Hall on Oxford Street, and was unveiled on 11 June 1912. Two more quickly followed, one to promote *The Mousmé* at the Shaftesbury Theatre, and one for Hitching's, the baby carriage specialist on Old Bond Street. In 1913, he also set up the John Hassall Designs Company, together with Leonard Carr Cox and Charles Moxon Orchardson. The company was short-lived, as it was dissolved a year later due to the outbreak of war, but presumably it aimed to offer a complete commercial service for clients without the go-between of an agent. Some posters from this period bear the company's stamp.

During this period Hassall also became part of the newly formed Society of Humorous Art, which held an exhibition at the Goupil Gallery in December 1912. The show was organised in association with *London Opinion* magazine and had a membership gleaned from the leading lights of comic art, including many *Punch* artists and members of the London Sketch Club: Cecil Aldin, W. Douglas Almond, H.M. Bateman, George Belcher, René Bull, Dudley Hardy, George Morrow, Charles Pears, Leonard Raven-Hill, Edward Tennyson Reed, Frank Reynolds, William Heath Robinson, Harry Rountree, J.A. Shepherd, Lance Thackeray and Leslie Ward. They were asked to contribute six pictures each and to design a varnished poster which would be worn by sandwich men around London by way of promotion. Arthur Rackham was also invited to become a member but wrote back to Hassall explaining he was unsure he would have enough humorous pictures to contribute to any exhibition.

It is likely the concept was inspired by the Salon des Humoristes, first organised by the French magazine, *Le Rire* in 1907. In 1909, Hassall had been invited to participate and contributed thirty-eight different pictures for the exhibition which took place at the Palais de Glace in the Champs-Elysées, Paris from 24 April to 15 June. He was the only British artist to exhibit that year, but in 1908, F.H. Townsend of *Punch*, G.L. Stampa, Cecil P. Lewis and Claude Shepperson had also taken part. It was a prestigious event with some of France's most influential figures in press art and graphic design on the committee; the cartoonists Poulbot and Sem, poster artists Steinlen and Chéret as well as the directors of some of France and Germany's most important illustrated magazines – *L'Illustration*, *Simplicissimus*, *Jugend* and *Lüstige Blatter*. If the event planted the seeds for staging something similar in Britain, it was also further proof that Hassall's fame had spread beyond British shores.

Hassall had been keen to elevate poster art to a recognised discipline a decade earlier and had joined forces with several like-minded artists to exhibit under the auspices of a Poster Academy. Now, this new society's aim was to provide a vehicle able to promote a high standard of humorous art in the country.

Another exhibition took place the following year, but by that time Aldin and Thackeray had left the society, and Hardy and several others had failed to contribute pictures to the show. A change of direction was decided for the following year, and instead of drawing from a relatively small pool of British artists, the First International Exhibition of Humorous Art, known as *The Laughter Show*, was held at Holland Park Hall, with exhibitors drawn from all over the world, including America and Germany. The show's aim was to be 'as gay and irresponsible as possible', according to a report in *Printers' Ink* magazine, and exhibits were more varied too with humorous posters, toys and statues alongside cartoons. There were caricatures of artists next to their contributions, and a French artist, Maurice Gottlob, even exhibited two statuettes of stage favourites carved from biscuit. A number of 'stunts' had been devised by some of the leading British artists, including Hassall, who intriguingly was to do something on the themes of 'The Angling Competition' and 'The Channel Swimmer'.

Cover design by John Hassall for the programme accompanying the first exhibition of the Society of Humorous Art, held at the Goupil Gallery in December 1912.

Children's Country Holidays Fund poster, 1920. The charity provided holidays to poor, city children. Hassall carried out work, often for free, for many causes during his lifetime, ranging from illustrations for a Titanic disaster theatrical fundraiser in 1912 to National War Savings paper bags featuring Wee Macgreegor in 1917. Joan Hassall felt that her father's generosity was one reason he was troubled by money worries in later life.

Although Hassall was heavily involved in the show, the organising secretary was alarmed to discover that on the morning of the final day before opening, he had still not received the Hassall contributions. A phone call revealed this was because they had not actually been done, but three hours later several sketches arrived at the hall. No doubt Hassall's tendency to do things at the eleventh hour frayed a few nerves over the years. He was asked to open the show with a speech but, prior to that, decided to pose as a pavement artist outside, dashing off a number of posters which were stuck up nearby, with passers-by exhorted to 'Spare a copper' for the Artists' Benevolent Fund. The grand finale of *The Laughter Show* was a fancy dress ball on the theme of the Epsom Derby, held on 27 May – Derby Night. Revellers could bet on a race and even rent a coach in which to dine for the evening. Normally, Hassall would have jumped at the chance of taking part, but his diaries make reference to, 'Joan serious – shocking cough', so it seems he remained at home. The whole exhibition had been a truly cosmopolitan event, and a coming-together of talent from across the globe. However, there would be no repeat of the exhibition the following year. Just two months after the close of *The Laughter Show*, Europe would descend into war.

Hassall was forty-six in August 1914, too old to join up like the tens of thousands of men who were rushing to enlist in the first, frenzied weeks of the war. He may not have been able to fight with a bayonet, but he could arguably do more damage with a brush and pencil. The First World War was to witness the civilian British population galvanise itself into action, whether through volunteering, nursing, fundraising or simply knitting socks for the troops. Hassall's reputation for generosity was already well-known, and as charitable work was a primary activity among upper-class women of the period, he was regularly cajoled into giving drawings for free for charity matinée programmes or charity auctions, or was asked to make appearances at bazaars, fêtes and fundraising dinners where his party piece was to sketch while being accompanied by a pianist. For the period 1914–18, Hassall's log books are crammed with entries, which are divided, often equally, into paid jobs and those he had done for free. In large lettering along the top of the page for 1917–18, he has written, 'THIS WAS A THICK YEAR FOR CHARITY DRAWINGS'. Among the jobs mentioned are a cover for the *Motor Transport Corps* magazine, a poster for National Baby Week, a programme cover at the request of Lauri de Frece (husband of Vesta Tilley) for a matinée in support of the Crutch Fund at Daly's Theatre and pictures for a Red Cross fundraiser at Walton-on-the-Naze. He designed posters and a flag pin in support of the Ivory Cross Fund, a charity which arranged dental work for soldiers. As somebody who had often suffered with his teeth,

Opposite: Newspaper cutting of Hassall's impressions of his visit to the front as a member of Alfred Lester's concert party in 1915. Note the hand preventing the piano falling off the cramped stage in the middle picture!

Hassall drawing quickfire sketches at a Red Cross fundraising sports day at Eltham in 1918. He would perform in all kinds of venues during the war, from hospitals to West End theatres, drawing hundreds of pictures for war charities.

once with a painful 'gum boil' back in 1902, he must have had empathy with any men having to endure toothache or similar ailments while on active service.

Unsurprisingly, a number of recruitment posters came out of the Hassall studio, some of which were adapted from Boer War designs for the sake of speed (one design was a modernised version of the Nestlé's Milk poster he had designed fifteen years earlier). There were music sheet designs for patriotic songs, including the famous, 'Your King and Country Want You' composed by Paul Rubens, and he was continuing with book work throughout. Some were published as another fundraising tool, such as *Princess Marie-José's Children's Book*, sold in aid of the Vestiaire Marie-José, an organisation providing food and clothing to children behind the fighting lines in Flanders, or a children's painting book for the Belgian Relief Fund in which each drawing referenced a well-known brand with a wartime theme. Hassall also created a quite brilliant spoof of the Bayeux Tapestry, *Ye Berlyne Tapestrie – Wilhelm's Invasion of Flanders*, in fold-out book form, where different panels illustrated various woeful aspects of Germany's military campaign, such as 'Wilhelm Giveth Orders for Frightfulness' and 'Special Objects of Attack', which included Rheims Cathedral, hospitals, ambulances, as well as 'Olde Men, Women and Children'. He worked on the design throughout October 1915, one day allowing nine-year-old Joan, who was nursing a cold, to help paint in the red. There were newspaper cartoons, too, for titles including the *Evening Standard* and *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, all of which, in common with all cartoonists at the time, poked fun at the Germans. It is hard to recognise the Teutophile Hassall of the pre-war days. A decade earlier, he had attended an Old Neuenheimers' dinner at the Criterion, where a letter from the Kaiser was read out: 'It has been most gratifying to his Majesty to hear that the Old Neuenheimers always use their influence to strengthen the good feeling between Germany and Great Britain.' On another occasion, in May 1911, at the invitation of the Lord Mayor, Hassall attended the inaugural meeting of the Anglo-German Friendship Society. Now he was drawing cartoons of Germans as 'baby-killers'.

Ian, aged fifteen, was desperate to join up, and made attempts to do so until his father found out and quickly put a stop to it. When he finally was of age, he joined the London Scottish Regiment and at the beginning of February 1918 made it out to France. At the end of March his battalion was at Bailleul, just east of Arras, and suffered an enemy bombardment in which gas was also released. Ian was one of the victims. Hospitalised, his war was over; he spent time in Canada as a lumberjack after the war in a bid to restore his health. Ian was luckier than most. There were other casualties among those close to the Hassall family. John Moody's only son, Rowland, a captain in the Lancashire Fusiliers, was part of the British Expeditionary Force and was killed at Cambrai on 26 August 1914. Cecil Aldin's son, Dudley, was killed in action at Vimy Ridge on 15 May 1916. He was just nineteen.

Hassall, drawing on his vast reserves of energy, did everything he could to help the war effort, and in May 1915 was one of a concert party organised by his friend, the comic actor Alfred Lester, who travelled to France. Like most entertainment at the front, the facilities were basic, and they had to make do with setting up a stage in an old carpenter's shed. The programme was properly printed though, and read as follows:

EMPIRE THEATRE
(I don't think)

Tommy's Tea Shop, or Shed,
_____, France
Tonight at 6 o' clock
Big or Little Willy allowing (?)

ALFRED LESTER'S

Small Party of Alleged Comedians
SHAUN GLENVILLE

Will sing a bit, talk a bit, and dance some

JOHN HASSALL

Will sketch, and, if encouraged, talk a bit. If time, and you have not cleared out, he will make another attempt to do something.
Prices – Nowt, nix, and fall in.
Entrance by door only.
No sniping allowed.

It was an invitation that appealed to the tongue-in-cheek sense of humour of the British Tommy.

Hassall spoke to a reporter afterwards: 'It was a great do. You never saw such a cheerful bunch of customers. With heads bandaged and arms in slings, on crutches and sticks, they crowded into our theatre until there was hardly room for the performers.' There was clearly some friendly

Left:
Two examples from Hassall's 'More news via Liarless from Berlin' postcards, published by Jarrold & Son during the war. The series mocked the inflated stories told in the German press about the British.

Hassall was always dashing off quick sketches at dinners or fundraising events. This one bears a resemblance to George Robey.

heckling, as he commented, 'There isn't a finer backchat comedian than Mr. Atkins, wounded or whole. They kept us in roars of laughter.'

Of the venue: 'It ought to have accommodated about forty people in comfort. But it gave a little here and there and by the time we started it looked as if the British Army was taking the night off. There must have been at least 400 inside, and it was just a wee bit stuffy.'

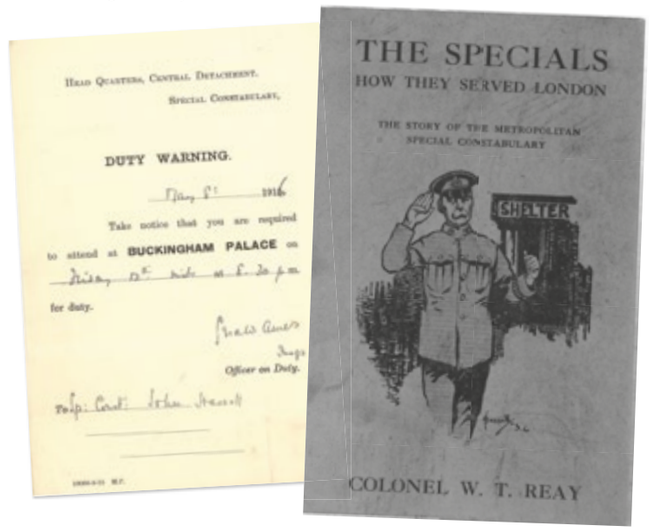
Those who could not squeeze in either climbed on to the roof to look through a skylight or pressed their ears against cracks in the wooden walls, and even though it rained incessantly throughout the concert, the overflow audience stood outside in the rain and bellowed the choruses. For his part, Hassall did some lightning cartoon sketches, 'that went down very well', and also introduced 'my famous performing hat that has made several appearances at the London Sketch Club concerts'. His easel, constructed of just two bits of wood and a nail, was not terribly sturdy but held up for the duration.

Back at home, every day was taken up with providing drawings for one or another cause and making appearances at charity events. In July, Hassall and Hardy appeared at an event for the Three Arts Women's Employment Fund, doing sketches to be sold at a set price. On 28 October 1915, he did a drawing for the matinée at the London Hippodrome to be held in memory of Nurse Edith Cavell (incorrectly named Alice Cavell by Hassall in his diary). On Christmas Day that year, after 'presents in every direction' and attending church, he took his easel and drawing board and went to Charing Cross Hospital where several well-known figures were putting on an entertainment. Hassall did five drawings for the wounded soldiers while there. The following Christmas he invited a large group of soldiers to his own home, putting on a Christmas entertainment in his studio. He was pictured in the *Daily Mirror* pulling a cracker with one man.

Hassall was friendly with British theatre's biggest star, George Robey, the so-called 'Prime Minister of Mirth'. Robey's enormous fundraising efforts during the war would earn him a knighthood, and he frequently called in favours among acquaintances for his charitable activities. Robey had pulling power and a show under his organisation would see auditoriums easily filled. In February 1916, Hassall was part of a glittering line-up at the Palladium in a concert organised by Robey for the Soldiers' and Sailors' Free Buffet fund. Also performing were some of theatre's biggest stars: Violet Loraine, Lee White, Irene Vanbrugh, George Grossmith and Robey himself. In October that year, Hassall supplied a poster for a fundraiser Robey was holding at the Alhambra in aid of St Dunstan's Home for Blinded Soldiers and Sailors. Elsewhere he designed posters, pictures and programmes for the Red Cross Pearls appeal, for huts for the YWCA, and even the British Dog Wool Association, which aimed to supplement reduced stocks of wool with yarn spun out of collected dog hair!

In addition to paid work and the mounting requests for *gratis* drawings, Hassall also served as a special constable during the war, and was stationed at Buckingham Palace for patrol duty, tasked mainly from preventing trespassers on palace grounds. On 27 November 1915, he wrote in his diary that he had been on duty through the night from 12.30–5.00 am, 'in the frost' and, chilled through, got a taxi cab home to bed where he stayed until 11.00 am, before getting up to work on another poster, and on to the Savage Club that evening. He also had the pleasure of showing King George V, Queen Mary and Princess Mary around the RI exhibition in 1916. The King would have known Hassall. In 1909, as Prince of Wales, he had attended a Savage Club dinner and, four years prior to that, Hassall had donated a 'poster' picture and frontispiece for the souvenir programme for a concert in aid of the Union Jack Club, receiving a letter of thanks on behalf of the prince from his Private Secretary, Arthur Bigge (Lord Stamfordham). Even earlier than that, the King had, as Prince George of Wales, been in Neuenheim at the same time as Hassall in the 1880s. He was not at the school but was instead privately tutored and stayed in rooms overlooking the River Necke. The boys of the school would often see the young prince going for walks or attending the Sunday service at the English church. On one occasion, as Hassall was a head monitor, he secured a pew close to the prince and surreptitiously sketched him.

Another casualty of the war had been Hassall's art school, which carried on for some time but eventually closed. Instead, he revived it as a correspondence school and mounted an intensive advertising campaign, often aimed specifically at soldiers, who, as well as using drawing as a way to pass the time, could hone their skills with a view to finding employment beyond the war. Although Hassall had initially had reservations about this mode of teaching, it was clear that attending and committing to classes was impossible during wartime, but a course that could be followed from anywhere in the world allowed much more flexibility. As before, there was a serious focus on training artists to earn a living. In the introduction of the course prospectus, Hassall gave a rousing pep talk to potential students: 'While I believe that Art is its own reward, I do not think one should neglect the practical side. Indeed I have designed my Course to



A duty warning to Special Constable Hassall notifying him he would be expected at Buckingham Palace at 8.30 pm. After the war, *The Specials* by Colonel W.T. Reay would have a dust jacket designed by Hassall.

Hassall at work on his painting *Unemployed* in 1906, wearing his standard studio outfit of a suit with incongruously dainty slippers.

a practical end. As you pass a hoarding, I want your OWN POSTER to look down on you.'

Advertisements for the school, which tended to appear in weekly magazines such as the *Tatler* and the *Bystander*, always included a typical Hassall sketch (during the war this was often a caricature of 'Jerry') with encouragement to copy it and send in their drawing for a no-obligation assessment by Hassall himself. There was a standard drawing course, as well as a more advanced poster course, and for the sum of £15 15s, students would be sent regular course notes and receive feedback from Hassall at each stage. If the fee was paid in full rather than in instalments, subscribers also received a complete 'John Hassall' outfit consisting of a drawing board, paper, pencils, pens, charcoals, brushes, ink, Chinese White, set squares and compasses. Initially, the correspondence school operated from the Stratford Studios address, before moving its headquarters to St Alban's, where it continued to run until the mid-1930s.

In 1922, Dudley Hardy died suddenly of a heart attack at his Notting Hill home in Powis Square, aged fifty-five. Hassall attended the funeral at Brookwood Cemetery, along with other artist friends and Savage or London Sketch Club members, among them Bert Thomas, A.K. Macdonald, Percy Bradshaw, George Frampton and Joseph Simpson. Dudley Hardy – kind, genial, rotund Dudley, who was called 'Ugley Dugley' by the Hassall children – had been not only one of his oldest friends, but a business colleague, a fellow clubman, a partner in crime. His passing was a blow to Hassall.

By the 1920s Hassall's poster commissions became less frequent, at least in comparison to the frenetic demand of the pre-war years. Having attained a sage-like status with regard to the subject, he was still in demand for his views on poster art and advertising in general, and was frequently asked to give lectures around the country, as well as judge endless art competitions. Although he was always interested in innovation in advertising, he had little time for gimmicks. At a meeting of the Publicity Club in 1926, the topic of discussion was 'What I think about advertising'. When somebody expressed admiration for the new idea of sky-writing, Hassall's acerbic retort was, 'Just fancy a lovely sunset with Bile Beans written across it.'

More of his time was now devoted to book illustration, especially for children, although during the interwar years he also designed a number of striking covers for fiction and humour titles from publishers such as The Bodley Head. He continued to paint his more serious works, many of which travelled around the country where they were exhibited at various provincial galleries. In 1926, he selected the unusual venue of Parsons Showrooms at 315-317 Oxford Street for a one-man exhibition, explaining the concept in a short illustrated introduction to the exhibition booklet: 'The House of Parsons seemed to be the very spot for this style of setting. Where the paintings could be seen as they would be in Private House or Hotel. Not crowded walls of pictures. But so hung that the decoration of wall, frieze and moulding can all join in the general effect.' It was a concept, suggesting that paintings should be enjoyed anywhere and by anyone, that summed up Hassall's practical approach to art.

His social life continued to revolve around his clubs, or as a guest at smart luncheons and dinners, and whenever a London Sketch Club smoking dinner or an arts club ball was held, he relished the opportunity to dress up. Maud and he spent periods apart but maintained an affectionate correspondence with each other during these times. He would often go to Walton-on-the-Naze on his own or stay on longer after a trip together; and she sometimes went on holidays with friends or with one or more of the children. The letters from Creek Cottages give her news of how the garden was coming along or whether any new flints or arrowheads had been found. If his letters to her are anything to go by, his devotion to her remained firm. They are full of chatter about his daily doings, domestic concerns and the children, but are also peppered with tender expressions of love. One letter that survives in his archives from 1907, four years into their marriage, begins with a fairy-tale romance, in which she was a princess, and he her knight:

> 'My dearest Maud
> There was once the most beautiful Princess the world had ever seen, and she was greatly loved by a rough and ready Knight.'

He tells her about what he has been doing in London; going to the Trocadero to eat, and then to the Lyric Theatre, but also mentions 'baby' (Joan, who was born the previous year), who he describes as 'too delightful' and mentions that she spent time with him in the morning ('splendid'). One 1909 letter recounts a scenario familiar to many parents – the early morning wake-up call. It seems Ian was going through a religious phase and bought Hassall a prayer and hymn book for his birthday. He recounts how at 6.00 am Ian came into his bedroom to ask him what hymn he should read: 'I ½ asleep

Joan Hassall as a baby with her mother, 1907. Joan would inherit her father's artistic talent and became a wood engraver. However, her delicate, intricate illustrations are in direct contrast to the robust, colourful style of her father's work.

Hassall with Dorothy, Ian and Isabel, *c.* 1903. One magazine profile of him stated he always ensured he spent at least two hours a day with his children, drawing with them, making toys and models or playing games.

said 303 – it was "When Morning Gilds the Skies"! Could anything have been more appropriate?'

Another letter, undated, but likely to be around 1910, and addressed to Maud who was staying at Dallinghoo with Ian and Joan, was written shortly after his birthday. He tells her about who did and did not remember to send him a card, and about the 'absolute crush of work' he had, and that he sent the carpets away to be cleaned ('the staircase looks quite new'), but his final paragraph shows what an unashamed romantic he was:

> Goodbye now and God bless my dearest darlingest wife, and help me to make her ever so happy and try in fact to make her as happy as she has made me. You are the sweetest lovingest, prettiest darling in the whole wide world, and I am the proudest lovingest, happiest man on earth. There now, that settles it – you'll have to wait for more till the next letter comes. Goodbye my girlie – give my best love to Ian and Joan and tell Ian I'll write as soon as I can.
>
> Ever your own adoring husband,
> John.

A letter, dated 1923, written to his children from his bed during an illness. Hassall's letters to his children are full of little sketches and playful jokes.

His letters to his children are a delight too, reflecting a father who was funny, thoughtful and blessed with a natural ability to amuse children. On one occasion he describes a trip to the Natural History Museum, complete with little dinosaur doodles. Another time, he sends them an annotated cartoon picture of himself, lying in bed ill and drawn by looking at his reflection in the mirror opposite.

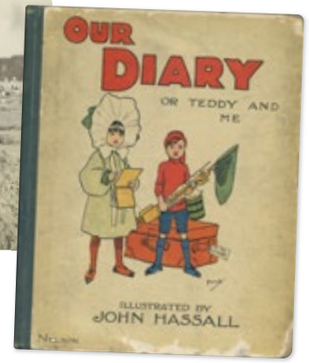
With Dorothy born in 1896 and his fifth and final child, Christopher, in 1912, young children were part of the Hassall household over two decades. Hassall cherished family life, and many of his book and magazine illustrations appear to have been inspired by first-hand experience. A series of humorous colour illustrations of mischievous children, possibly done for *Little Folks* magazine, could easily be drawn from real life, such as the picture that shows two children drawing faces on bathroom tiles with the caption, 'Daddy WILL be pleased'. There are others that are almost certainly autobiographical. An illustration across a double-page spread published in *Black & White* magazine in 1902 is entitled 'Home from the Holidays', and shows a coach disgorging families, together with luggage, fishing nets, buckets, spades and even a parrot in a cage, outside the pillared entrance to a London house. It looks remarkably like 88 Kensington Park Road. In August 1904, the *Sketch* published a charming illustration entitled, 'How doth the little Busy Bee', showing three children, viewed from behind, watching beehives. The words in the lower left corner – 'Dallinghoo, 1904' – confirms it as Dorothy, Ian and Isabel. Particularly touching

Left:
Hassall in his mid-forties at Walton-on-the-Naze, holding his youngest child, Christopher. Christopher, known as 'Topher' by his siblings, would become a prize-winning poet, biographer and lyricist, notably working with Ivor Novello.

is the dedication in the front of the 1905 book *Ruff and Reddy* by G.E. Farrow and May Byron, to Dorothy Muriel. Some years later, in 1911, at the Lord Mayor's Children's Fancy Dress Ball at Mansion House, Ian and Isabel attended, with Ian wearing a perfect replica of the mock-Elizabethan-style outfit of exaggerated tall hat and pantaloons worn by the book's character.

In some ways the Hassall children had a secure and privileged upbringing typical of their class. However, it must also have been extraordinary to live in a household buzzing with visitors of all kinds and to rub shoulders with artists and famous figures. Then there was their father's studio, where he might make little figures or toys for the children, and of course the regular theatricals and fancy dress costumes he so enjoyed. It was a stimulating atmosphere in which they flourished. Ian, Joan and Christopher, in particular, followed careers in the arts. Ian, a London Sketch Club member since the day of his birth, became an artist and,

Many of Hassall's illustrations drew on his experience of fatherhood and *Our Diary*, published by Thomas Nelson in 1905, seems to particularly mirror the seaside holidays and activities of his own children. Photograph taken during a 1906 holiday to the Norfolk coast, probably at Runton.



John and Maud posed for a photograph in his studio, with his famous mock bookcase, concealing a hidden door, seen behind them, *c.* 1904.

An exquisite portrait of Christopher Hassall by his sister Joan, who engraved the picture for the frontispiece of his 1938 volume of poems, *Penthesperon*, published by William Heinemann.

when he moved to Australia in 1949, set up the country's first open-air art gallery in the artistic colony of Eltham near Melbourne, as well as painting pictures that hung in both public galleries and private homes around Australia. Joan also showed an exceptional talent for art. She took lessons at her father's school (also working as his occasional secretary) and took all the first prizes at the school's annual exhibition in 1927 (though she was quick to tell a reporter that her father did not take part in the judging). She also studied at the Royal Academy and Byam Shaw art schools, and spent some time as assistant to the portrait painter Gerald Kelly before enrolling on a course in wood engraving at a London County Council education institute. There she found her métier. She taught book production at Edinburgh College of Art during the 1940s, but increasingly became renowned for her delicate, meticulous engravings to illustrate books, including the novels of Jane Austen and poetry volumes by her younger brother. She designed stamps to mark the silver wedding anniversary of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth, and was chosen to design the invitation for the coronation in 1953. Like her father, failing eyesight interfered with her work and she was eventually obliged to give up in later life. She was awarded the OBE in 1987, a year before her death.

Christopher attended Brighton College and then went up to Oxford where he became involved in the Oxford University Dramatic Society, playing Romeo opposite Peggy Ashcroft in a production directed by John Gielgud. Never comfortable with acting, he began to write poetry with the encouragement of his friend, the art patron Edward Marsh, whose biography he would later write. His theatre work led to an introduction to Ivor Novello, after which he became the composer's lyricist. He was also a biographer, notably of Rupert Brooke as well as of Marsh. Christopher had been unable to sit his finals at Oxford, owing – according to several accounts – to 'a family financial crisis', although the specific details of this are not clear.

Certainly, by the 1930s work was not so plentiful. The decade embraced a new modernism in design and as a consequence the Hassall style of poster fell out of vogue. Hassall himself was beginning to struggle with his eyesight, though he obstinately refused to wear glasses, making do with a magnifying glass instead. At the RI exhibition of 1936, a report in the *Scotsman*, noted, 'that wonderful, old man, John Hassall, who was doing really modern books and posters in the nineties is still going strong'. Still going strong perhaps, but no longer 'really modern'. It must have been galling to read such assessments. Over at the Royal Academy that year, Hassall found himself an exhibit rather than exhibitor, when he became the subject of a portrait by James Gunn. Wearing a dark coat, a cigarette in hand, it is as if he is captured just before departing for one his evenings at the club. Appropriately, it now hangs in the London Sketch Club.

Hassall may also have ruminated on his currency as an artist when a poster exhibition at the V&A opened in 1935, including examples of his and Hardy's posters as part of a narrative of British poster art. On the one hand, this positioned him, quite rightly, at the forefront of the British poster school of fifty years earlier. On the other hand, did this now also consign him to the past? Was he now of dwindling relevance? In 1935, Cecil Aldin died after suffering from years of chronic rheumatoid arthritis. Hassall must have felt he was the last man standing. Another celebration of past achievements took place in 1934, when he was guest of honour at a dinner at Frascati's given by the Skegness Advancement Association to publicly thank him for creation of the poster that had done so much for the town. He was presented with a silver figure of 'Jolly' and two years later was invited to Skegness for the first time, where he was presented with a illuminated vellum and the Freedom of the town. Hassall was bemused to learn this gave him free access to the town's cinema and golf course.

If *Skegness is SO Bracing* had defined a town, then Hassall's enormous back catalogue of work had defined an era. For an artist whose greatness in his chosen field was rooted in a style so robustly personal and so vividly associated with a certain time, it was too late for reinvention. His posters had spoken to a generation, but a new generation had taken its place, and in this respect Hassall had the disadvantage of living longer than most of his contemporaries. Artists like Phil May and Tom Browne had died tragically young, but at the height of their powers and popularity. Their talent, suspended in time, was never tested in a new era of changing tastes. Like a number of artists of his generation, he found the aspects of modern art unfathomable and was among a number of signatories (Frank O. Salisbury was another) to a letter in *The Times* in 1944 requesting the government withdraw funding from the C.E.M.A. (Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, formed in 1940 to preserve and support arts and culture in Britain) for its art exhibitions which, claimed the group, comprised of paintings 'devised to carry on the baleful influence of what is known

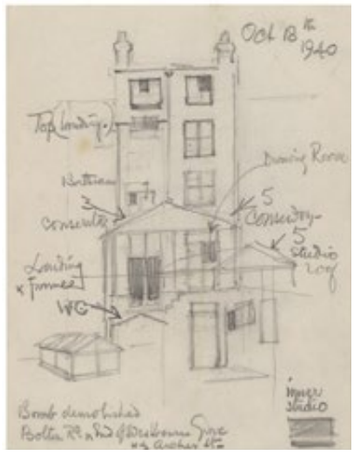
John Hassall painted by James Gunn, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1936. Reproduced by kind permission of the Savage Club.

Hassall in the garden at Walton-on-the-Naze. He would often write to Maud, informing her of the progress of flowers and vegetables she and the children had planted.

as "modernistic" art. This is a subversive movement which, with its several "isms" has been for many years endeavouring to undermine the traditional glories of painting and sculpture.' His support of this demand shows a surprising amount of conservatism from someone who throughout his career had always been so encouraging to other artists. However, for an artist such as Hassall, whose training on the Continent had followed a conventional path, and whose pictures were so successful precisely for their clarity of meaning, Modern Art, with its abstract forms and ambiguity, must have been an anathema.

The impecunious situation Hassall found himself in by this period was alleviated somewhat in May 1939 when he was granted a modest civil list pension of £110 per year for services to poster art. When war broke out, both his sons joined up. Ian had been under-age for much of the First World War, and now found himself almost over-age, but he joined the Royal Navy, rising to the rank of Lieutenant Commander by the war's end. Christopher joined the Royal Artillery. John and Maud were to experience war close-up when, in April 1941, a bomb fell on 86 Kensington Park Road, completely destroying it and causing considerable damage to surrounding buildings, including no. 88. Hassall had been asleep upstairs and hurried down the stairs, which were littered with smashed and splintered pictures fallen from the walls, to find Maud safe, having found shelter under the dining room table. The house was uninhabitable for a while and so they had to move out, staying in Walton-on-the-Naze and with Dorothy and her family in Didcot. In the period of upheaval following this disaster, John wrote to Maud, who had not yet joined him at Didcot, assuring her that some of her prized possessions were safe and regretting he did not bring his police medals with him.

A sketch by Hassall of the back of 88 Kensington Park Road, showing areas of damage during an air raid that destroyed the neighbouring house and necessitated a move to Didcot to stay with his eldest child, Dorothy, while repairs were carried out.



Nevertheless, they were safe and the house could be repaired. Dorothy's son, David Dobereiner, was about twelve at the time his grandfather came to stay with them, and remembers the family sitting around the table each evening after dinner playing a drawing game of 'Heads, body, legs' with a folded piece of paper, each member drawing a different body part before the whole was revealed with hilarious results. His grandfather's portions were, of course, always far superior to everyone else's efforts.

By the end of the war Hassall was in declining health. Bruce Bairnsfather, his former pupil and friend, wrote to him from America in the winter of 1946–7, where he was in the midst of a mammoth tour:

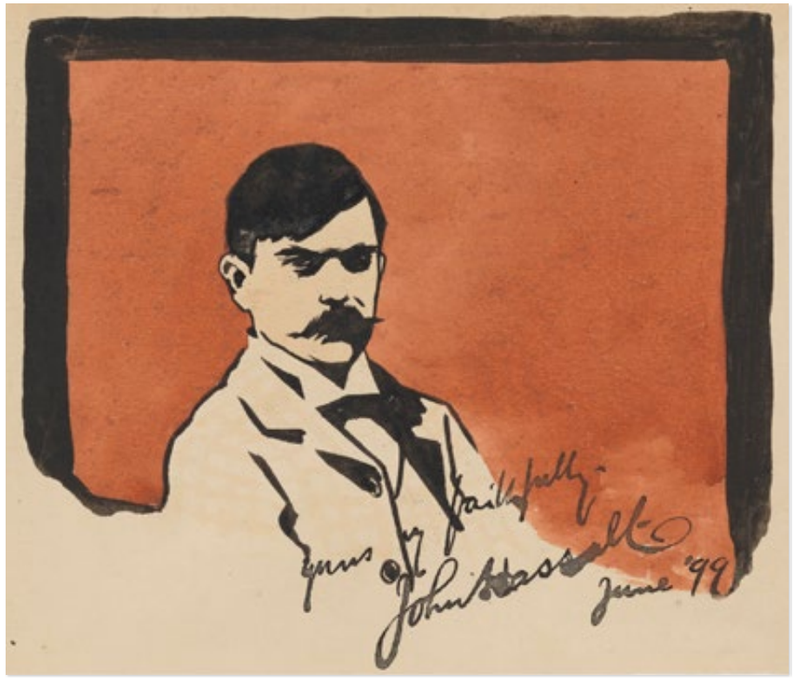
> Our good friend Barri [William Barribal (1874–1952), the artist known for his illustrations of glamorous women] tells me that you are not at all well at the present time and in consequence are confined to the house. I trust that even before this letter reaches you, things will have changed for the better, and that you will be yourself again. This resulting from the splendid and youthful vigour you have always had.

It was difficult to reconcile the aging, invalid Hassall with the one so renowned for his boundless energy, stoic work ethic and ready wit. John Hassall died at 88 Kensington Park Road on 8 March 1948, aged seventy-nine. His funeral was held at St Peter's Church on 12 March and he was buried in Gunnersbury Cemetery. Among the wreaths sent was one from Skegness Council, with a figure of the Jolly Fisherman created from blooms. Maud lived another two years and died in October 1950, aged seventy-two.

Hassall's obituaries did not, by and large, do justice to his achievements. *The Times* acknowledged his status as a poster artist but incorrectly attributed Will Owen's Bisto poster to him (though the paper would print a correction a week later) and then criticised his watercolour paintings as 'embarrassingly sentimental and technically very dull'. Other notices were brief. Most mentioned, inevitably, the Jolly Fisherman, but only skimmed the surface of Hassall's multi-faceted career and failed to convey the far-reaching effect of his friendships, teaching and connections. However, one obituary stands out. It was from *Truth* magazine, and although anonymous was clearly by somebody who knew him:

> The newspapers were for the most part, I thought, a little ungracious about John Hassall, or, if not ungracious, unknowledgeable. He was much more than a great poster artist and an individual illustrator. He was a great person, a 'character' in the good sense of the word. Competent critics tend to denigrate his work as a water colourist but here again he had a strong individual artistry, and is not to be condemned because

Hassall photographed at the London Sketch Club annual exhibition in 1947, the year before his death. Although demand for his designs had reduced, he continued to work during the Second World War and attended his clubs when his health allowed.



Self-portrait, 1899.

work of his kind is not work of some other kind.

It is almost inevitable when one of Jack Hassall's generation and mode of life dies to write of 'the last of the Bohemians.' He was not that, for the sturdy breed survives, but he was one of the last Edwardian Bohemians. His tall figure and puckish – almost 'puggish' – good-humoured face, his ready flow of talk, his quick wit, made him a distinctive figure in any circle. His capacity for after-dinner speaking transcended that of many more famous than he for that pleasant art. The decline of his vogue as a poster and book artist was a minor tragedy for him but it never affected his geniality and his poise. Few men can have had more friends; no man can have had a better friend than Jack Hassall could be.

In 1968, a century on from John's birth, Joan Hassall organised an exhibition of her father's work at Leighton House in Kensington. It showed a small selection of posters, including his later Skegness design from the 1920s, alongside original paintings and illustrations and some of his nursery friezes. Publicity surrounding the exhibition was low-key and it was poorly attended.

Nevertheless, the visitors' book makes for interesting reading. There were members of the Hassall family, including Dorothy and Isabel, and there were Mrs Bert Thomas and Mrs Ellis Silas, widows of two of Hassall's artist friends. There was Shirley Vulliamy, better known as the author and illustrator Shirley Hughes, and Iona Opie and her son, Robert, who today is a leading expert on the history of advertising and brands, as well as founder of the Museum of Brands in West London. These were people who, as experts and enthusiasts in their own field, recognised the importance of John Hassall's legacy. Another visitor was Bevis Hillier, antiques columnist for *The Times* and poster expert, who would write a book on poster art the following year, tapping into the second wave of enthusiasm for the poster during the sixties. A few weeks after the exhibition, Hillier devoted a column to John Hassall, in which he gave an unsentimental and critically balanced assessment:

> Hassall is, by nobody's standards a great artist. But he was a hack of genius. The same prodigal flow of ideas that comes to the great artist or writer malgré lui came to him too; but the ideas were translated into Hassall's bouncy, facetious style, and whatever subtle or sublime qualities might have been in them were sacrificed to obtain an effect of pawky humour … . If what he portrays in his ruddy-cheeked pieman and urchins is an Olde England that never quite existed it only increases the appeal of his work for modern collectors, even more remote than him from that rosy mirage.

John Hassall would no doubt have been irritated at Hillier's opinion. Although he took pride in his success as a commercial artist, he always harboured ambitions to be viewed as a painter in the grand manner. Hillier was right to a certain extent. Hassall was a good painter, but he was not a great one. However, that, perhaps, does not matter, for there were a great many aspects of Hassall's work in which he was peerless. He was an illustrator who often showed remarkable virtuosity, particularly in his work for picture books, an unparalleled ideas man and a designer with a fearless conviction of what would work. Success meant Hassall moved in elite circles, yet that success had been founded on his instinctive ability to appeal to the everyman. A year after his death, John Hassall's 1908 poster for London Underground featured in an exhibition on London Transport posters at the V&A. The show was entitled, *Art for All*, an epitaph that could easily be applied to the artist. John Hassall's art had mass appeal, and reflects back to us the tastes, aspirations, humour and preoccupations of the times through which he lived. One of his skills was to sum up the spirit of whatever play, resort or brand his poster was promoting. Today, his vast body of work, a selection of which is represented in this book, seems to sum up both the spirt of an age – and the spirit of the man behind it.

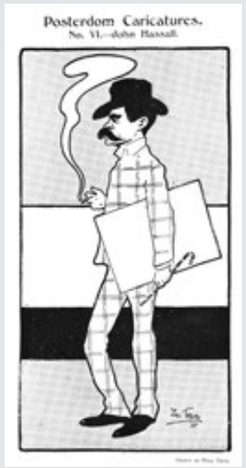
HASSALL BY HIS FRIENDS

John Hassall, good-humoured, genial and expansive by nature, was a popular man and forged many friendships within the artistic community. Usually known as 'Jack' among his friends, even the greetings in some of the surviving letters to him – 'Dearest Johnnie Lad', 'Dear President Jack', 'My dearest Hassall' and 'My Dear Captain' – indicate how well-liked he was. As a prominent member of several clubs, and in particular the London Sketch Club where drawing practice formed part of each social gathering, his larger-than-life personality was often captured by fellow artists.

John Hassall at Work by Charles Daniel Ward (1872–1935), oil on board. A more conventional portrait by Ward, a painter of portraits and landscapes who regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy.

John Hassall Smoking by Stephen Baghot de la Bere (1877–1927), gouache on card. Baghot de la Bere was a fellow London Sketch Club member and adopted the poster style of Hassall, Tom Browne and Cecil Aldin. He later went on to paint watercolours, often illustrating stories in periodicals, and was elected a member of the RI in 1907.

Caricature by Will True (1866–1955), also known as M. Mallet. True was a fellow poster designer working for David Allen & Sons, and among the high-profile British poster artists making their mark by the end of the 1890s. He made at least three caricatures of Hassall.



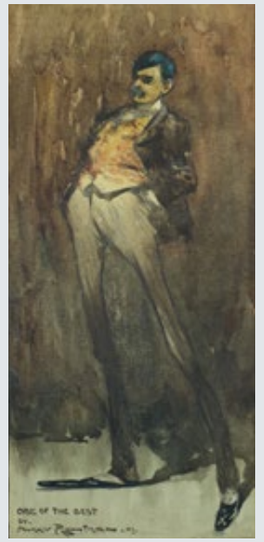
A superb caricature of Hassall by H.M. Bateman (1887–1970). Bateman was a talented but shy teenager when he was introduced to Hassall, who recommended he study with Charles van Havermaet. By the 1930s he had become the highest-paid cartoonist in Britain, having developed his own inimitable and original style of cartoon; a rapid-fire, fluent and occasionally frenzied portrayal of the human condition, in which not only comic situations but feelings – whether fear or fury – flowed from his pen. He retained a lifelong admiration for the energy and talent of his early mentor.

IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT 'JACK' IS AN EXCEEDINGLY POPULAR MAN. STRAIGHTFORWARD, UNASSUMING, MODEST, HE IS GENERALLY RECOGNISED AS, 'ONE OF THE VERY BEST' ALWAYS READY TO LISTEN TO A TALE OF WOE AND SHARE HIS OWN GOOD FORTUNE WITH ANOTHER.

– *Pearson's* magazine, 1916

Ink portrait by Frank Reynolds (1876–1953). With a few broad strokes of ink, Reynolds' dramatic sketch captures Hassall's occasionally intense countenance. It was Hassall who suggested to Reynolds that he try working in pencil and crayon, which gave him a far greater range. He was elected to the RI in 1903, two years after Hassall, and became a contributor to *Punch* in 1906, succeeding his brother-in-law, F.H. Townsend as Art Editor in 1920. Like Hassall, Reynolds was a regular contributor to the *Sketch* and continued to draw for it into the Second World War. Hassall and Reynolds were joint illustrators of the 'Sports Alphabet' series of 'Monax' cigarette cards, produced by A. & J. Coudens in 1924.

A pen and ink sketch of Hassall in front of a large canvas by his good friend Cecil Aldin (1870–1935). Hassall often referred to fixing or replacing the stove in his studio, and the scarf around his neck suggests the cavernous space could have been a little chilly. It was rare for him to be pictured without a cigarette in his hand or hanging from his lips, and even for the time he was a heavy smoker.



One of the Best by Harry Rountree (1878–1950), gouache on card. Born in New Zealand, Rountree had already worked as a commercial artist for a printers in Auckland before moving to England in 1901. He was a prolific illustrator and was particularly well-known for his animal pictures. He was a member of both the Savage Club and the London Sketch Club, becoming President of the latter in 1914. Hassall and he collaborated on the Pug Peter books, with Hassall providing the pen and ink vignettes to Rountree's full colour illustrations. The inscription on his caricature of Hassall reflects the high regard in which he was held by other artists.

CHAPTER 1

THEATRE AND ENTERTAINMENT

In the mid-1890s, the printer David Allen & Sons was the undisputed leader in the field of theatrical advertising, and its Leicester Square office, according to the theatre historian Walter James Macqueen-Pope, was, 'the nerve centre of the printing for the British Theatre':

> To have your printing supplied by David Allen & Sons Ltd was to go a long way towards success. They catered for everyone, from the greatest of the great actor-managers down to the humblest touring company playing the smallest towns, and they supplied personal posters to nearly every great star of the world of the Music Hall. David Allen & Sons was a most important place, at once a bulwark of the theatre and the spearhead of its attack.

The company's success was founded on technical expertise and artistic superiority. For the former, the Allen sons ensured they kept abreast with latest lithographic printing methods, with the result that their posters were of high quality and were a faithful reproduction of the original design. For the latter, they engaged a pool of artists who were the best in their field, including Will True, Albert Morrow, Alick P.F. Ritchie, William Barribal and, from 1896, John Hassall, whose arrival at David Allen & Sons was one of fortuitous timing. The firm had established a large, new printing works at Harrow and work was pouring in. Hassall and the Allen brothers formed a mutually beneficial relationship. Hassall had the security of a salaried contract and the brothers were able to maintain their dominance with the addition of an artist whose posters were becoming the talk of the town. In an age when theatre and music halls were the main forms of entertainment, successful shows achieved extraordinary levels of popularity, and so did the posters tempting the public to the stalls. They became the subject of popular discussion – the water-cooler moments of their age – sometimes published in the press or reviewed in newspapers, all publicity of which led to further commissions for both printer and artist.

Until the late 1870s, posters in Britain were printed from wood blocks, until David Allen & Sons made its first attempts at lithographic posters, initially experimenting with designs for pantomime. Early lithographic posters used a paper transfer instead of drawing on to the stone directly, but by 1884 designs were drawn on to stone in both black and colour, in a technique brought over from America by one of the artists who had been working at the Strobridge Lithographing Company in Cincinnati, best known for the vivid posters for the Barnum & Bailey Circus. The process allowed precise and colour-saturated designs to be shown to their best advantage.

Hassall was in the vanguard of a set of British poster artists who had a new way of looking at the world. The idea, descended from Fred Walker's pioneering *Woman in White* poster more than two decades earlier, was to capture the essence of a play with design rather than to replicate an actual scene. A Hassall poster, with its robust outlines and vivid but limited colour palette was particularly effective at conveying an idea. He elaborated in an interview in the theatrical paper, the *Era*, in March 1917:

> A good poster should sum up the spirit of the piece advertised without, so to speak, giving the show away. It should be an interpretation of the general atmosphere rather than an illustration of a particular scene or incident.

In another interview, in *Pearson's Weekly* in 1905, Hassall explained about the importance of colour in posters, choices that were, in part, dictated by the British climate:

> I have said that our climate limits the artistic development of the poster, and that is so. You must paint in colours which will withstand inclement weather and so reds and yellows predominate in English posters.
>
> Purple, it may interest you to know, is the worst of all colours for a poster; in fact owing to the rapidity with which it fades, it can only be used rarely.

Rather than be impeded by these restrictions, British poster artists took advantage of it. Dudley Hardy's *Gaiety Girl* poster would not have the same impact without its vivid red background. Likewise, there are Hassall's posters for *A Night Out* at the Vaudeville Theatre in 1896, or *How London Lives* at the Princess's Theatre in 1898, both dominated by red, while the yellow backdrop of *The Wild Rabbit* staged at the Criterion in 1899 still feels fresh and modern in its simplicity. The choice of colours may have been partly dictated by technical limitations, but the overall effect was balanced, assured and visually striking. These posters, especially when pasted multiple times to repeat across a single hoarding, must have been an arresting sight. The need for impact continued to be more important than ever during the First World

The *Playgoer* magazine, 1902, published by Greening & Co. Ltd. As well as designing the cover, Hassall also provided sketches of scenes from plays and cartoons for the inside.

The Wild Rabbit poster, 1899. The play, by George Arliss and produced by Stanley Cooke at the Criterion Theatre was a comedy about mistaken identity. The wild rabbit of the title was only occasionally mentioned in the play, but it provided a strong identity and inspired Hassall to design one of his most striking posters. The *Poster* magazine commented that European connoisseurs would think it typically British because of the visible buck teeth, which was considered, 'a prominent feature of the English type abroad'. It concluded the poster was, 'sure to attract attention, not only by its innate wit, but also by the simplicity of its treatment'.

War, when the 1914 Defence of the Realm Act limited the size of theatre posters to 30 x 20 in.

Whereas colour and the execution of the design were essential to get right, for Hassall it was often all about the idea, and in this respect he would push boundaries, coming up with unconventional concepts which were often against his clients' better judgement. One design for the Follies, a popular Pierrot troupe founded and led by Harry Pélissier, was entitled *Hundreds Turned Away Nightly*, and depicted the remnants of an audience making hastily for the theatre exit while the forlorn members of the Follies, in their Pierrot costumes, stand dejectedly on the stage. Even Pélissier was unsure about a poster that suggested a show was so bad that people were literally scrambling to get away from it. Hassall persuaded him it would work and one single, large poster was pasted on a hoarding in the Strand as a test: 'the result was crowds and crowds of spectators and a double-quick order to the billposters to get busy'.

Of all his theatrical posters, it was those for pantomimes at the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane that gave Hassall most pleasure, allowing his imagination free rein. He was particularly pleased when one year two medieval figures, dressed identically to characters in his poster, were introduced into the show accompanied by a placard declaring, 'We Are the Poster'. In the *Poster*'s December 1898 issue, Charles Hiatt devoted several columns to the pantomime posters of John Hassall in which he praised his approach:

> It must be counted to Mr. Hassall for righteousness that he is always decorative. Decoration is quite rightly his first object, and the production of a counterfeit presentment is a secondary matter. It is, of course, proper that the pattern of the poster should bear some relation to the thing it advertises. It would be incongruous to advertise an ecclesiastical festival by means of what Huysmans has called a cascade de clowns, even as it would be ludicrous to advertise a ballet by reproducing the paraphernalia of a hospital. Mr. Hassall is appropriate, but he does not therefore place needlessly rigid limits upon his imagination … . Of the two posters of 'Little Red Riding Hood' reproduced here, each has the saving merit of simplicity. Both are decorative, without running into intricate and ineffective detail.

Hiatt concluded:

> All the posters to which I have referred, and others which have been reproduced in previous issues of the magazine, prove conclusively Mr. Hassall's taste and skill, and place him in the front rank of the English poster designers of to-day.

Only occasionally do recognisable stars of the stage appear in his posters, most notably Dan Leno, who was such a huge draw that theatre managers felt that his face was a guarantee of a sold-out box office. On 5 November 1901, Hassall wrote in his diary, 'altered Dan Leno's face on chimney', referring to his poster for Drury Lane's *Bluebeard*. The face is undoubtedly that of Leno but it is possible Hassall was asked to add it in after submitting a first version. In common with other poster artists, he was perpetually frustrated at having to bend his designs to the will of the client, who he believed did not understand the principles of an effective poster. As he explained in his interview for the *Era* magazine in 1917:

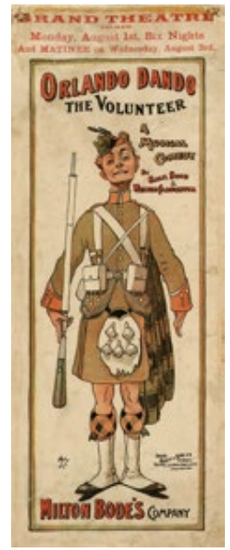
> If the best possible poster is to be produced, I think that the manager should give the poster-artist the maximum amount of free play. Assistance, of course, may be invaluable, but definite orders are nearly always a heavy handicap.

In another (undated) interview with the *Telegraph*, he grumbled:

> The people who buy the posters should really try to visualise them as they appear on the hoardings. Too much lettering is bad from the point of view of the advertisement as well as the artistic stand point.

It is worth noting that the new kind of poster style did not entirely dominate. For sensational melodramas, usually staged away from the West End in suburban theatres, the more literal theatre poster still continued to be used into the 1890s, where a dramatic scene from the play and copious text combined to create a busier design, but one that was familiar and closely associated with the productions they promoted. Most posters in this genre were not signed and their creators are unknown. With the splash made by the artistic poster cohort, this style began to viewed as passé, although it is unlikely it put off audiences. Magazines such as the *Studio* or the *Artist*, as arbiters of what did and did not count as good taste, naturally promoted the artistic poster, which was in harmony with the aesthetic sensibilities. The *Poster* had been founded expressly to champion this new superior style. There was little in the press to commend the old-fashioned melodramatic poster but it endured for some time in tandem with its more modern counterpart.

Hassall's conviction of the power of his designs is to be admired but it occasionally



Poster for *Orlando Dando, The Volunteer*, Grand Theatre, Fulham, 1898.

Left: Flyer for the popular farce, *Charley's Aunt* by Brandon Thomas for a revival at the Royalty Theatre in 1907. The monkey throwing nuts refers to the play's catchphrase, 'Where the nuts come from'.

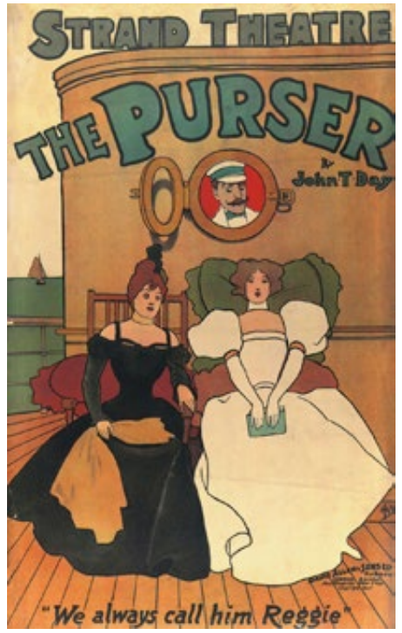
verged on arrogance. Some sympathy must be felt for theatre managers. They knew their audience, and the negative space so beloved by Hassall and other leading poster artists made them nervous. Surely it could be better utilised by being filled with images or text? It was a natural instinct to interfere and differences of opinion between artist and client continued within and beyond the world of theatre.

Most posters from the printworks of David Allen & Sons, as well as other printing companies, were also available as picture postcards, as giveaways or to buy. The postcard craze was at its height from the turn of the century and through the First World War, and reproductions of artistic posters were popular, particularly those of the most well-known shows. They also allowed people to 'own' or share a poster, albeit a miniaturised version, whether or not they had seen the show.

Aside from theatre posters, Hassall produced designs for many other aspects of entertainment, including music sheet covers for leading publishers such as Chappell & Co., programmes for concerts and theatrical fundraisers and, another popular phenomenon of the Edwardian era, the historical pageant, which usually called for something dignified or allegorical – perhaps a patriotic figure astride a white steed unfurling the Union Jack or stately Britannia surveying her realm. More personally, there were also the frequent smoking *conversaziones* at the London Sketch Club or dinners at the Savage Club, the Odde Fellowes or Old Neuenheimers, for which Hassall would regularly provide a design.

The more Hassall designed for theatre and other forms of entertainment, the more he himself became drawn into that world. Not only did his posters form a lasting visual memento of productions, but he was increasingly asked to take part in variety shows for charity, especially during the First World War when he would perform lightning sketches on stage, sometimes at some of the biggest West End theatres. He could always be relied upon to dream up a funny sketch to be performed at a London Sketch Club evening and, on occasion, he was the creative force behind larger events, such as the Royal Institute's Historical Costume Ball in 1911 which, as Master of Revels, he produced and directed, appearing in no fewer than four different costume changes through the course of the evening. He moved in the same circles as such stars as George Robey and Harry Tate, and among letters that survive in his archives are those from the actor Harry Grattan, actor-manager Herbert Beerbohm Tree and the composer Herman Finck. As an eloquent raconteur and an enthusiastic performer, the theatre felt like natural territory for John Hassall. It is unsurprising that it inspired some of his most enduring designs.

Original artwork of pen, ink and gouache for postcard series, *Popular Songs Illustrated*, published by Davidson Bros., *c.* 1903.

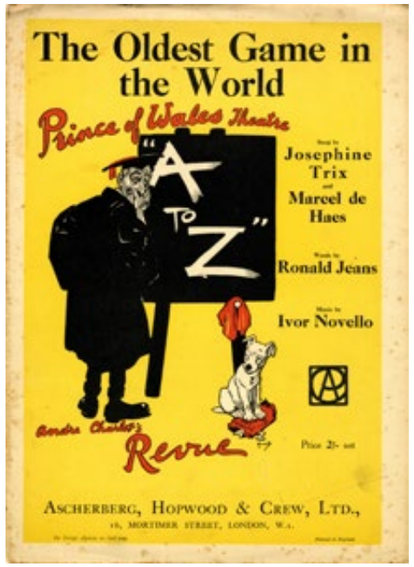


Top left: Poster for a revival of *The French Maid* at the Vaudeville Theatre in 1897.

Top right: The Shop Girl, staged at the Gaiety Theatre, 1894–6. The influence of Jules Chéret and Dudley Hardy is evident in this early design by Hassall.

Bottom left: The Purser, a farce set on board a P&O steamer, ran at the Strand Theatre in 1897.

Bottom right: Orlando Dando, The Volunteer, a musical comedy by Basil Hood and Walter Slaughter, was written as a vehicle for the music hall star Dan Leno. It opened at the Grand Theatre, Fulham in 1898.



Top left: 'Martial Moments (March Medley)' songbook, date unknown.

Top right: A to Z, the revue at the Prince of Wales' Theatre from impresario André Charlot was one of the theatrical successes of 1920–1. The music was by Ivor Novello, with whom Hassall's son, Christopher would later work as lyricist.

Bottom row: Music sheet for, 'If You Were the Only Girl in the World', the hit song from the hit revue of the First World War at the Alhambra, *The Bing Boys are Here*, starring George Robey, Alfred Lester and Violet Loraine. The show was followed up by *The Bing Boys on Broadway* and *The Bing Girls are There*.

Two theatre poster designs by Hassall from 1926, thirty years after he had embarked on his career as a poster artist:
Left: Poster reproduced on a promotional postcard of *The Best People* at the Lyric Theatre, produced by Jack Waller and Herbert Clayton, who gained a reputation for bringing American musical comedies to London's West End during this period.
Right: The Whole Town's Talking was written by John Emerson and Anita Loos, and was made into a silent movie the same year it was staged in London. Hassall's posters have their characters in modern fashions, and he adopted a rounder, more cartoon-like style in many later designs.

Top left: Business as Usual, one of the first revues of the First World War, opened at the London Hippodrome in August 1914 and featured a number of war-themed sketches. (Poster reproduced on a promotional postcard).

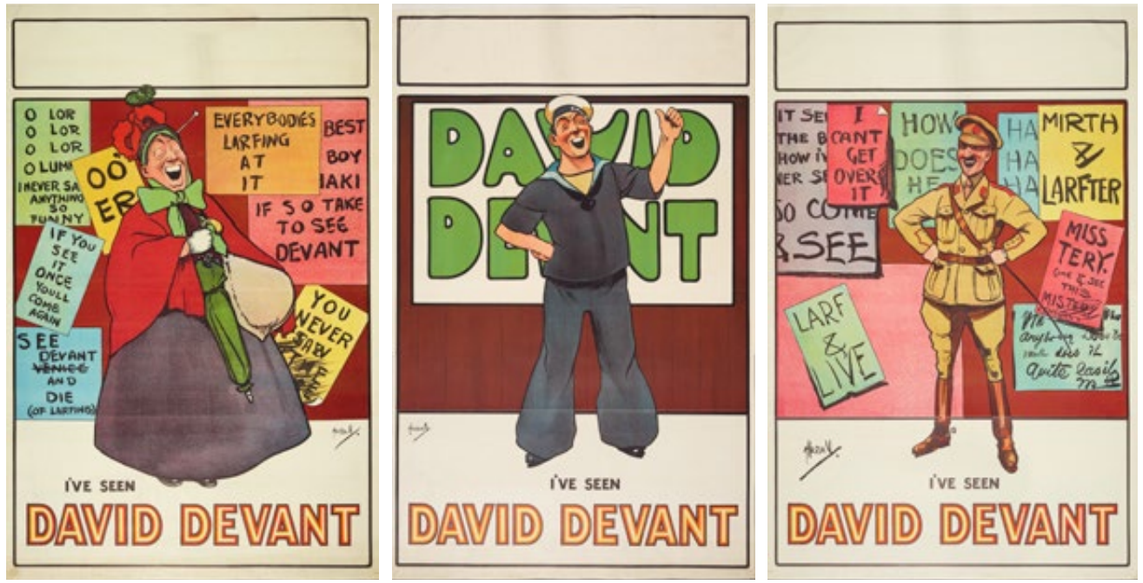
Top right: The Sport of Kings, a farce set against the backdrop of the horse racing world, was written by Ian Hay and opened at the Savoy Theatre in 1924.

Bottom left: The Gay Gordons at the Aldwych Theatre, 1907, was performed by the Seymour Hicks Company, which included actresses Ellaline Terriss and Zena Dare, as well as Hicks in the lead roles. (Poster reproduced on a promotional postcard).

Bottom right: Poster for *The Dandy Fifth*, Duke of York's Theatre, 1898.

Top row:
Hassall often reprised and adapted characters for new projects, and these two posters, for *A Country Girl* at Daly's Theatre in 1902, and *Lady Tatters* at the Shaftesbury Theatre in 1907, show clear similarities.

Bottom row:
A similar formula used by Hassall for these two poster designs, for *Lord Tom Noddy* from 1896, starring the diminutive and hugely popular 'Little Tich', and *Tantalizing Tommy* from 1910.



David Devant was one of Britain's leading magicians and stage illusionists and performed as part of the Maskelyne & Cooke company at St George's Hall and other large venues. His suave and witty stage persona ensured his audiences were often in fits of laughter, as suggested by Hassall's series of posters which are a simple concept, brilliantly executed. The landscape format poster (bottom) offers an unconventional view of the performer from behind, facing the audience. With the figure of Devant placed off-centre and his arms outstretched, it captures a moment, literally, of pure magic.

Top left: A Brace of Partridges, Garrick Theatre, 1898. The *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* in its review suggested its premise (a comedy of errors involving twins) was unoriginal but nevertheless, called it, 'an amusing piece'.

Top right: Two Little Vagabonds, Royal Princess's Theatre, 1896. Hassall's concept of a poster within a poster cleverly tapped into the 'postermania' of the period.

Bottom: The White Knight, Terry's Theatre, 1898. The white knight of the title, and of Hassall's picture, refers not to a medieval theme but to the character, Edward Pennycuick, the inventor behind the Electric White Lead Company, played by Edward Terry. Hassall sometimes inserted a more lifelike face of the lead actor into the otherwise flat graphics of his poster.

Allegorical and historical female figures, such as Britannia and Queen Elizabeth I, were popular symbols of British culture and military might in the Imperial era, and Hassall regularly drew stately women draped in classical robes for posters and programmes advertising military tournaments, pageants, exhibitions, fundraising concerts, balls and fêtes. Such imagery began to fall out of favour after the First World War and it is interesting that for the Pageant of Empire, performed as part of the British Empire Exhibition in 1924, Hassall chooses to draw a more humorous character, fallen asleep while painting in the areas ruled by Britain on a world map.

FANCY DRESS

Fancy dress was a family affair in the Hassall household. In 1911, Ian and Isabel attended the annual children's fancy dress party given by the Lord Mayor at Mansion House. 'Belle Hassall' was reported to have worn a Persian outfit, while Ian gamely wore an exact replica of the costume belonging to the lead character in G.E. Farrow and May Byron's *Ruff and Reddy*, illustrated by his father.

Master Ian Hassall
Son of Mr. John Hassall, artist

John Hassall's love of costume manifested itself not only in his pictures but also in his enthusiasm for fancy dress, stretching back to his student days in Antwerp. Like most of his projects, he would carry out his ideas with invention and gusto, often making costumes and props himself.

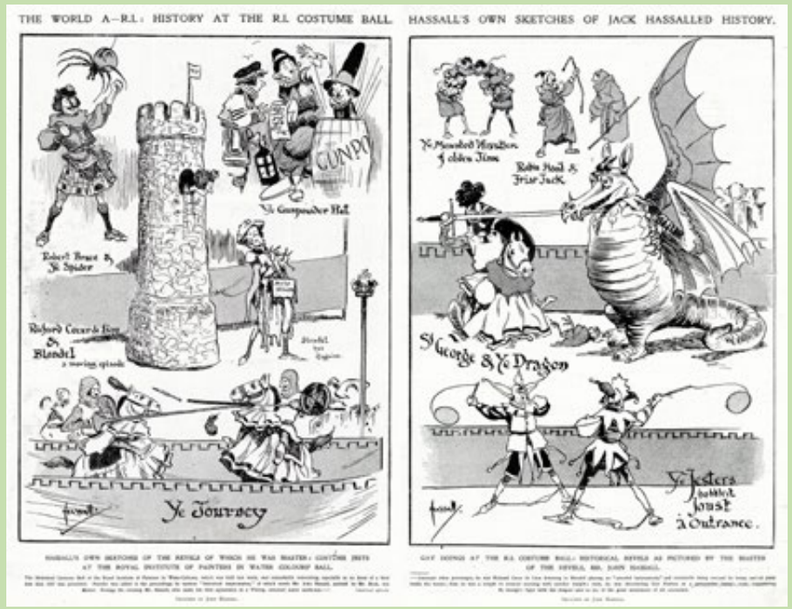
THE SAVAGE CLUB (MISS BRITON).

In November 1915, Hassall recorded in his diary that he had worked on three costume designs at the request of the producer, Albert de Courville, for the revue *Shell Out* at the Comedy Theatre. Although he did not elaborate on what the costumes were, it is more than likely that he was responsible for this London Savage Club outfit worn in a sketch celebrating London's various clubs.

Hassall getting into character as 'Hassa' for a party in his studio at 88 Kensington Park Road on 11 July 1907.

Hassall as St George in a costume for a London Sketch Club event, partly made from biscuits tins, courtesy of the artist George Parlby.

Maud as a 'Vi-Queen' to her husband's Viking, dressed up for the Three Arts Club Ball at the Royal Albert Hall on 20 December 1911.



As Master of Ceremonies, Hassall was responsible for the entertainment at the historical ball of the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolour in 1911, devising a series of humorous tableaux at intervals through the evening. It was also decreed that no costumes referencing a date later than 1837 (the accession of Queen Victoria) should be worn. The two-page spread of the evening by Hassall was published in the *Sketch* in its issue of 31 May 1911.

AMONGST THE PANTOMIME POSTER DESIGNERS THIS YEAR, MR. HASSALL ONCE MORE TAKES THE FIRST PLACE. HE SEEMS TO POSSESS THE SECRET OF PLEASING THE MAN IN THE STREET WITHOUT SERIOUSLY COMPROMISING HIS ARTISTIC IDEALS.

– *The Poster and the Pantomime* by Charles Hiatt, the *Poster*, December 1900

Top left: The White Cat, Drury Lane, 1904. Written by Arthur Collins and J. Hickory Wood, *The White Cat* was so popular, it continued to run into March 1905.

Bottom left: The Babes in the Wood, Drury Lane, 1907.

Right: Apart from the pantomime, a Christmas treat for children would be to visit a large department store, such as Pontings on Kensington High Street in London, to see the toy department and visit Father Christmas. At Pontings, children enjoyed the novelty of entering a large bus where a trip from Dover to Calais was recreated (another year young visitors 'travelled' to New York). Undated but likely to be early 1930s.

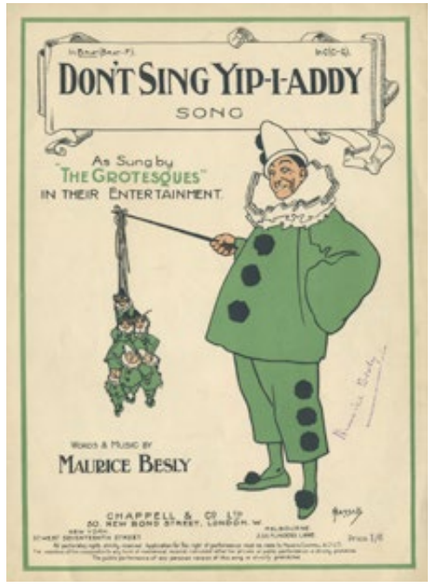
Top left: The Babes in the Wood, Drury Lane, 1907. Hassall's trademark mongrel makes an unexpected appearance in this poster.

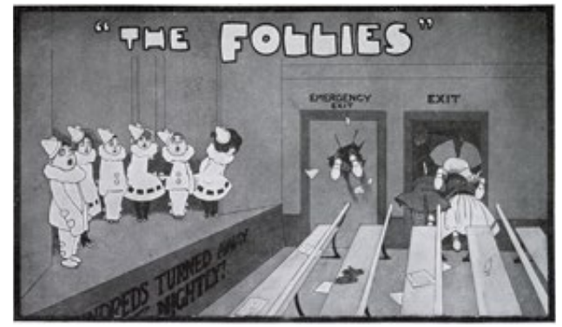
Top right: Poster for *Little Red Riding Hood* c. 1900. Like most pantomime posters, Hassall would create several versions, often in the same year. This one is likely to have been designed around the same time as his poppy version seen on p. 9.

Bottom left: Bluebeard, Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, 1901. Dan Leno was renowned for being one of the great exponents of the pantomime dame. On 5 November 1901, Hassall recorded in his diary that he, 'altered Dan Leno's face on chimney', and, on closer inspection, the face clearly belongs to him. Leno died of alcoholism in 1904, aged just forty-three.

Bottom right: Jack the Giant Killer. Hassall's poster for this pantomime is unusual in having a decorative border of holly leaves, giving it a more old-fashioned, Victorian feel. Milton Bode's touring company staged *Jack the Giant Killer* over several years; this poster probably dates from 1896.

As well as commissioning and printing posters for specific theatrical productions, in the case of pantomime, David Allen & Sons would have a stock of general designs which could be adapted with any venue's details and dates if they staged that production. Hassall's three posters (middle and bottom left, and right) were designed for this purpose in 1898. The two red, landscape examples are highly stylised and reminiscent of Aubrey Beardsley. The poster for the Drury Lane production of *Cinderella* in 1905, featuring the heroine with the Ugly Sisters, is in the more familiar comic Hassall style.





In 1891, a French family of pierrots appeared at the Prince of Wales' Theatre as *L'Enfant Prodigue* and set a fashion for pierrot troupes. Although they would become associated with the seaside, the most successful companies played variety shows in London's West End and at theatres around the country, among them Henry Pélissier's Follies, The Grotesques and The Drolls. Hassall's poster for The Follies (right centre), showing the audience dashing for the exits, went against natural instincts, but the public loved the joke and the poster triggered spoof versions by political cartoonists.

Top left: D'oyly Carte Opera Company poster, 1919. This design combined three separate posters for Gilbert and Sullivan's hugely popular operettas. Hassall designed *The Gondoliers* and *The Mikado* whereas Dudley Hardy was responsible for *The Yeoman of the Guard*.

Bottom left: The Little Genius, Shaftesbury Theatre, 1896. Hassall's poster was reproduced in the *Sketch* in November that year as an excellent example of the progression of poster art in Britain. The magazine admired the colour scheme of red, black and white but concluded it was, 'too crowded to be wholly effective'.

Top right: On the March, a musical comedy at the Prince of Wales' Theatre, which opened in June 1896.

Bottom right: The Only Way, Lyceum Theatre, 1899. Adapted from Charles Dickens's 1859 novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, the play flopped in London and was far more popular when toured around provincial theatres. Hassall's poster, however, depicting John Martin-Harvey as the dignified Sydney Carton climbing the guillotine scaffold, was widely admired.

Left: A Night Out, Vaudeville Theatre, 1896. Adapted from a French farce, *L'Hotel du Libre-Echange*, there is a touch of the Parisian Belle-Epoque about Hassall's poster, with the waiter in his white apron and fashionable lady in black with extravagant leg-o'-mutton sleeves. The trio of figures is set against the background of red with dazzling effect.

Right: How London Lives, Princess's Theatre, 1898. In the same spirit as *Two Little Vagabonds* (p. 97), Hassall chose to create a buzz about the play by showing a crowd, anxious to read all about it, in hot pursuit of a newsboy.

One of the poster artists Hassall most admired was Czech-born Alphonse Mucha (1860–1939) and these three examples from the 1890s combine the feminine curves and flourishes of Mucha with deeper colours and simpler forms. As pieces of art, most would agree that the abundantly decorative work of Mucha is superior, but as effective, eye-catching posters on the hoardings, Hassall is perhaps more successful.

Top left: The Daughters of Babylon, The Lyric Theatre, 1897.
Bottom left: The Geisha, Daly's Theatre, 1897.
Right: A Greek Slave, Daly's Theatre, 1898.

Top row:
Skating, or 'rinking', was a popular pastime during the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Hassall's drawings of ice skaters at the Niagara rink from the *Sketch*, 19 February 1902, features British skating stars, Edgar and Madge Syers. Holland Park Rink was a roller-skating rink and Hassall's promotional card probably dates from around 1920 when it re-opened to skaters after the war.

Bottom row:
Advertisements for the Red Spider Tea Rooms in Rickmansworth and the Green Parrot Tea Rooms in Bedford, 1920s.

Top left:
Hassall not only designed the invitation for Lady Letchworth's 'At Home' party in November 1907 but was also invited as a guest.

Bottom left:
Small card, undated, advertising the start of the pudding season at the Ye Olde Cheshire Cheese, off Fleet Street. The season traditionally began on the 1 October each year and the pub's famous steak and kidney pudding was served through the winter months.

Right:
Hassall's renown for theatre posters brought him much other related work; sheet music covers, theatre programmes and invitations, such as this one announcing the annual supper, held for staff at the Alfred Butt's Palace Theatre (undated).

Record sleeve for J. & M. Stone of Poplar, 1920s, with a street entertainer playing an accordion while making puppets dance with his feet.

CHAPTER 2

MAGAZINES

Although it was as a poster artist that John Hassall found fame, it was the illustrated magazine market that gave him his career break. The 1870 Elementary Education Act meant that by the end of the nineteenth century there was a newly literate generation and a growing appetite for reading matter that was cheap, accessible and amusing. Between books, newspapers and older, more established magazines, there was a gap in the market and publishers moved swiftly to fill it. Titles such as *Tit-Bits* launched by George Newnes in 1881, followed by his highly popular *Strand* magazine a decade later, the *Royal* magazine and *Pearson's Weekly* published by Arthur Pearson, Alfred Harmsworth's *London* magazine, the *Harmsworth*, and *Pall Mall Magazine* begun by William Waldorf Astor, were all launched in the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The *Sketch*, the first magazine to publish a Hassall comic drawing, was an offshoot of the *Illustrated London News* and was launched in 1893. These magazines, along with countless others, accounted for what was nothing short of a publishing explosion.

A select group, known as the 'mid-weeklies' – because they were published each Wednesday – were considered the most prestigious. The *Sketch* was one, and it was joined in 1901 by the *Tatler* and the *Bystander* in 1903. Among other magazines with the same levels of production quality were *Black and White*, the *Throne*, *Nash's* and the *Sphere*. Each of them considered pictures integral and central to their content, and actively sought to publish work by the finest illustrators. For artists who were regular contributors, while there was no exclusive, or official, affiliation, they would often be associated with the magazine, as Hassall was with the *Sketch* during the 1900s.

Some magazines tended to specialise in a certain genre of illustration. *London Opinion*, for example, published almost exclusively humorous line drawings, whereas more literary publications such as *Pall Mall*, smaller in size, required half-tone illustrations to accompany stories.

The *Sketch* offered more variation; there were illustrations to short or serialised stories, page or masthead decorations, and full pages devoted to humorous pictures. Hassall tended to draw the latter most frequently, regularly working to a theme that might run for a number of weeks, such as, 'To See Ourselves, As Others See Us', 'The London Season' or 'Studies of Children'. His drawings from this period often presented readers with recognisable 'types' drawn from all levels of Edwardian society: the gauche housemaid confused about the mysteries of running a bath, the 'loafer' pestering the public for pennies, the rotund bobby on the beat or the mischievous scamp causing mayhem with a barrage of snowballs. These and other exaggerated characterisations are nevertheless a vivid evocation of the period. Hassall found that travelling on the Underground occasionally helped him to conjure his characters and commit them to memory. A profile on him in the *St. James's Gazette* on 1 September 1903 explained: 'When he feels quite bankrupt of suggestions he takes himself in that direction, and, sometimes in 1st Class, then in a 3rd, he will sit the whole length of the line round, looking about him to see what his fellow passengers are like. Later the public have a laugh over his "finds".'

Several times a year – at Christmas, in summer or to mark a national occasion or a seasonal event – many magazines would publish a 'special number', a bumper issue where illustration tended to predominate, covers were bright and eye-catching, and a colour section inside blended humorous pictures, fine art and, sometimes, drawings for children. They were hotly anticipated. The newspapers would review the clutch of Christmas numbers available each year, and editors would draw on a pool of the best talent for contributions, advertising its line-up in the weeks leading up to publication. A bold, eye-catching Hassall cover was perfect for attracting attention on the newsstand, and his magazine cover credits included the *Sketch*, the *Tatler*, the *Gentlewoman* and the *Favorite*. He also famously designed every cover for the annual charity publication *Printers' Pie* and *Winter's Pie* magazine, first published by Hugh Spottiswoode, owner of the *Sphere* and the *Tatler* in aid of the Printers' Pension Corporation in 1902. The publication, which was filled with contributions by most of Hassall's friends and colleagues, continued through the First World War until it changed to the *Sketch Book & Printers' Pie* in the 1920s, and a new style of cover design was adopted.

Crystal Palace magazine cover by Hassall, a sombre design to mark the death of Queen Victoria in January 1901.

Magazine illustration could be roughly divided into two camps. There was reportage illustration, carried out by so-called special artists, who acted as artist-reporters and drew pictures of current events, usually for the more news-focused weekly magazines such as the *Graphic* and the *Illustrated London News*. And then there was illustration intended to amuse and entertain, broadly encompassing comic pictures, story illustrations (as well as sentimental or romantic subjects) and drawings of pretty girls. For the most part, Hassall fell into the latter camp, but during the 1900s in particular he also turned his hand to reportage drawing, and in 1902 a series of his pictures appeared in the *Sketch*, recording events around London. One issue featured his illustrations of a visit made by the Princess of Wales (the future Queen Mary) to the East End, in

another there were scenes from the Royal Tournament and an inter-varsity football match at Queen's Club in a further issue. Usually these reports would take the form of several vignettes brought together on one page. They are keenly observed but also drawn with a typical Hassall comic book charm, in accordance with the *Sketch*'s light-hearted approach. A few years earlier, he had illustrated some scenes of the Second Boer War in South Africa for the *Graphic*, although these tended to reflect a non-combatant, more human side to the war, as in the case of a picture of refugee children in Maritzburg travelling in a traction engine for a short holiday. Since Hassall was not himself present in South Africa, the picture was based on a sketch by one H. Lea; it was a typical practice that artists at home would interpret rough sketches sent back from the front by the specials. On another occasion, Hassall based a drawing on an impression from one of the *Graphic's* most intrepid special artists, W.T. Maud, who died shortly afterwards, aged thirty-eight, while reporting on the Somaliland expedition.

Although Hassall designed a number of political posters during the 1900s, he rarely expressed any strident viewpoints in his magazine work. He sometimes made comments on social issues, but this was perhaps more as an excuse to draw certain characters rather than to air any opinions. The unemployed man was a favourite subject, often depicted as the chancer who would rather scrounge a ha'penny from a kind, passing stranger than do a day's work. In one cartoon, a shabby individual has recounted his sob story so many times that he tells a lady in the street that he has a 'sick child at 'ome and six small wives', while in another, a man who has been fundraising for the 'poor unemployed' is glimpsed disappearing into a pub. The caption, however – 'With apologies to the real unemployed' – suggests Hassall sympathised with those who had genuinely fallen on hard times but had little patience with shirkers. His painting, *Unemployed*, showing a procession of out-of-work men was exhibited at the New Gallery in Regent Street in 1909, further bears out this theory.

Hassall also drew on life in his household for inspiration. In the many humorous pictures of children he created, it is easy to recognise Dorothy, Ian and Isabel, and in at least one drawing for the *Sketch*, the backdrop to his characters is unmistakeably Kensington Park Road. Another cartoon shows a scene at the breakfast table with a little girl asking her father what a press cutting agency is. Daddy, sifting through the press cuttings, gives the sardonic reply, 'An institution my dear, that sends one a hundred and twenty-five insults for a guinea.' Hassall, although an artist rather than a writer, also subscribed to a press cuttings service. He often chose children as his subject for special numbers or for supplements, such as his four delightful full-page illustrations of the seasons, published in the *Graphic* in 1902, or a glorious double-page spread for the same magazine in 1901, showing a densely packed children's fancy dress party. There were commissions, too, from children's magazines, such as *Little Folks*, as well as two famous publications aimed at boys and young men. The *Captain* was published monthly by George Newnes and contained stories by authors including P.G. Wodehouse, as well as articles on sports and hobbies. Hassall created the magazine's schoolboy figure in a sporty outfit topped with cap and trademark Hassall muffler, a combination of public-school swagger and upstanding masculinity. It was used on the cover and became synonymous with the magazine. In January 1908, the *Scout*, the magazine of Baden-Powell's newly formed Boy Scout movement, was first published, using Hassall's design of a watchful boy lying on rocks looking out to sea on the cover.

Aside from some of the most well-known consumer newsstand titles, Hassall also carried out work for a number of specialist publications, contributing two front cover designs to the *Poster* magazine in 1898 and 1899, but also designing covers for trade and artistic magazines such as *Printers' Ink*, the *Magazine of Commerce*, the *Artist*, *Drapers Record* and the *Print Seller*. Newspapers, including the *Daily Mirror*, the *Evening News* and the Salvation Army's *War Cry*, also published pictures by 'the famous poster artist'. Particularly interesting is a cover of the *Evening Standard* from 1927, in which Hassall portrayed himself as an exhausted pavement artist, worn out by drawing the six advertisements that featured below him. It was a brilliant promotional idea using his renown as a poster artist to create an imaginative advertorial in which he was the star.

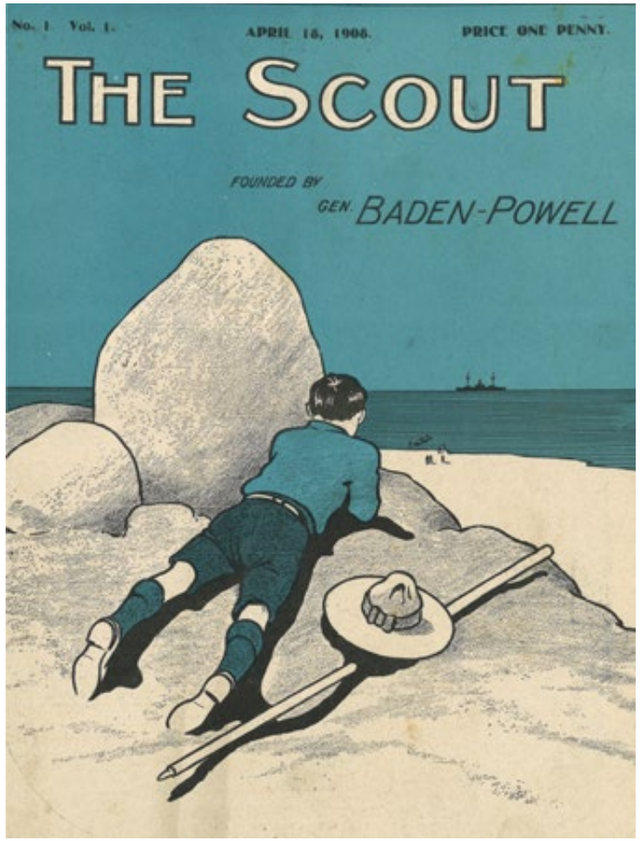
From the mid-1890s Hassall had steadily built up a portfolio of magazine clients, numerous enough to form a significant income stream to augment his poster commissions. Within a few years he was being sought out by the editors of new magazines who were keen to secure his services for their debut issues. In 1899, C. Williamson of the *West End Review* wrote to him, asking if he would submit a small sketch, 'wishing us success for the first number of our weekly issue'. A year later, when Clement Shorter was preparing to launch the *Sphere*, a magazine that would run for sixty-four years, he wrote to Hassall:

'Will you oblige me with an upright page of illustrations suitable for children – the size of the page of the new paper is 9" wide and 12" high.' It was not unusual for Hassall to be given free rein in this way, with only the vaguest of briefs to work to, but Clement Shorter, like other editors, knew that he was a safe pair of hands. Hassall was also always willing to dash off a picture quickly if deadlines were tight and he could be flexible on fees. He was not only a great talent, but he was also reliable, and that counted for much when deadlines – or budgets – were tight. In April 1907, he received the following letter from the editor of *Little Folks*, which is a brief but illuminating example of the esteem in which he was held:

Cover of the *Poster* magazine, Christmas number 1900. The magazine commissioned leading poster artists to design its covers and this is one of two by Hassall.

> Dear Sir!
>
> I regard you as a gentleman of the deepest dye and I should like just to say how very glad I am you are going to do a cover for L.F. and how much I appreciate your kindness in doing it 'on special terms'. If the devotion of a lifetime would be of any use to you, you've only got to mention it, and it is yours.

Many of the magazines that launched during the boom of the 1890s were short-lived, but together with those that were more successful, such as the *Graphic* (which ran until 1932) or the *Sketch* (which continued until 1959), they form an excellent and largely overlooked record of Hassall's artistic versatility away from poster art and book illustration.



Top left: *Everybody's Weekly*, Special Holiday Number, 3 June 1911. 'The Nut' was a term commonly used to describe a dandyish swell of the period, overly obsessed with his appearance.

Bottom left: Hassall's illustration for the *Boy's Own Paper*, a title that ran from 1879 to 1967, was reproduced as posters, advertisements and inserts. The paper, which had been started by the Religious Tract Society to encourage reading and Christian morals among boys and young men, became famous for its stirring adventure stories, tales of public school life and articles about sport, nature and hobbies. This railway carriage scene with two passengers peering at the copy read by a neat little Eton schoolboy summed up the universal popularity of this classic title.

Right: The *Scout*, 18 April 1908. Hassall knew Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the Scout Movement, well; they were both Sketch Club members and 'B-P' was a capable artist himself, even designing a recruitment poster during the First World War. Hassall was instrumental in building the branding of the scouts and suggested the name, inspired by the tracking skills of Native American Scouts. This cover for the *Scout* was adapted from an earlier design he did for Baden-Powell's *Scouting for Boys*, the movement's handbook.

Left: *Crystal Palace magazine*, c. 1901. The magazine was published by the Crystal Palace Company and was a vehicle for promoting events at the venue at Sydenham Hill. It was edited by Austin Fryers, the pen name of William Edward Clery (1861–1931), who lived locally. Hassall designed a number of its early covers.

Right: The *Captain* cover c. 1900. Hassall was involved in the *Captain* magazine from the beginning, designing the sporty schoolboy for the cover; the image would come to define the publication. It was edited by R.S. Warren Bell, who also wrote the book, *Bachelorland* with a cover designed by Hassall and, in fact, many of Hassall's acquaintances also contributed, including Tom Browne. His friend René Bull is credited on this cover, as is Keble Howard, who edited the *Sketch*.

Hassall may have been best known for his humorous pictures, but he could also turn his hand to sophistication and glamour when required, even occasionally illustrating fashion catalogue covers or clothing store posters.

Left: Shopping magazine, c. 1900s.

Right: The *Ludgate* magazine, c. 1900.

Top left: The *Crystal Palace Magazine*, Christmas number, November or December 1901.

Top right: The *London Stage Annual*, 1904.

Bottom left: Illustration in *West End Review*, October 1898.

Bottom right: The *Sketch*, Christmas Number, November 1902.

FOLLY TO A FAULT.

THE SKETCH.

A QUESTION OF FIGURE.

THE SKETCH.

THE WASTE OF IT.

THE CHRISTIAN IN LONDON

Although exaggerated for comic effect, Hassall's cartoons tell us something about the timelessness of everyday problems, from the uncle whose waistline has expanded beyond hope to exasperation felt by a clergyman to his fellow passengers on an omnibus. Note the advertisement card for the *Sketch* Hassall has managed to sneak behind the reverend's head.

Top left: The *Sketch*, 1 August 1906.

Top right: The *Sketch*, 22 March 1905.

Bottom right: The *Sketch*, 27 June 1906.

Bottom left: The *Sketch*, 9 October 1901.

"PITY THE UNEMPLOYED!"

THE SKETCH.

A PROBLEM OF THE UNEMPLOYED—EXPOUNDED BY JOHN HASSALL.

THE SKETCH.

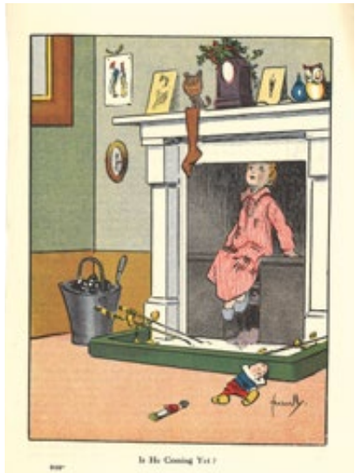
THINGS OVERHEARD BY JOHN HASSALL.

Top left: The *Sketch*, 8 February 1905

Top right: The *Sketch*, 22 June 1904

Bottom left: The *Sketch*, 18 January 1905. Interestingly, the backdrop to this cartoon is unmistakably that of Kensington Park Road, where Hassall lived at number 88. This, and *The Waste of it* on the opposite page, have been coloured in lightly with watercolour.

Bottom right: Unemployment was a subject of both sympathy and satire in Hassall's world. While he regularly lampooned work-shy types in his cartoons, he also painted the striking picture, *Unemployed* (p. 236), and gave his time to charities that supported the poor. Clearly a topical theme, the London Sketch Club held an 'unemployed supper' in 1905. Hassall can be seen far left of the photo, keeping order among the layabouts in his police officer's costume.



Hassall delighted in drawing children and seemed to revel in depicting their curiosity and mischief. This set of pictures, printers' proofs found in the Hassall archive, were likely done for a children's magazine, possibly *Little Folks*.

Hassall takes on the role of pavement artist in this inspired advertising initiative in the *Evening Standard* where designs for six different clients from Whiteway's Cider to Luvisca shirts are arranged beneath his own self-portrait. The rough sketch for the Southsea portion is from the Hassall archives at the University of Essex.

Top left: The *Crystal Palace Magazine*, c. 1901

Top right: Mr Punch's Diary by Walter Emanuel (Bradbury, Agnew & Co., 1905), a humorous review of 1904. Despite Hassall's reputation as a humorous artist, he was not a *Punch* contributor. In several interviews, he claimed to have had drawings accepted in 1890 at the same time as the *Daily Graphic*, but a search in the magazine does not reveal anything. Nevertheless, his reputation as a cover designer led to several commissions under the *Punch* name, as well as an illustration for the spine of the *Punch Library of Humour*.

Bottom left: Illustrated Bits (incorporated with Pick Me Up), 1909, cover designed by Hassall.

Bottom right: Weekly Telegraph, poster, 1900s. Hassall designed a number of posters for this humorous magazine, each showing readers completely engrossed in the latest issue.

Mastheads for British magazines, The *Sketch, Moonshine* and *Home Comfort* designed by Hassall during the 1900s. The first two provided Hassall with much of his regular work in his early days as a commercial artist.

Right: L'Affiche Artistique: Bulletin Mensuel de la Société Belge des Affichophiles (*The Artistic Poster: Monthly Bulletin of the Society of Belgian Poster Enthusiasts*). November-December 1901. Hassall's renown led to this commission for this Belgian magazine, published in Antwerp, and reflects the continuing interest in poster collectng during this period.

Top left and right: The *Magazine of Commerce*, September 1903. Hassall chose a merchant from the Tudor period as the cover for this publication. As a pivotal figure in the world of commerce, it is perhaps unsurprising he was commissioned to design covers for a variety of trade and specialist magazines. He was also in demand as an interviewee for magazines such as *Printers' Ink*, who were keen to share Hassall's advice on advertising.

Bottom left: The *Printseller*, *c.* 1903.
The *Printseller*, edited by Stanley Elston Austin, launched in January 1903 and aimed to report on collecting and appreciating fine art prints. It reflected a growing democratisation of art during the Victorian and Edwardian era. There had been a programme of building municipal art galleries around the country, papers published engravings or colour prints of works of art within their issues and, in 1908 the Medici Society began to publish affordable art prints for the public.

Founded in 1887, *Drapers' Record* (now simply known as *Drapers*) is one of the few publications Hassall designed for still in publication today. These two covers date from the early 1900s. One heralds the new monarch, King Edward VII in 1901, while the 'Special Spring Number' depicts a stately figure against a backdrop of the Exposition Universelle in Paris, dating the issue to April 1900.

The *Graphic* usually commissioned Hassall to provide colour illustrations which were published at full page. The larger format of the magazine, which was roughly A3, allowed him to draw lots of detail using finer outlines. These pictures, illustrating the four seasons, were published periodically in the *Graphic* in 1902.

Above:
The *Sporting Times* was informally known as the *'Pink 'Un'* due to its pink pages, and the publication used the name for their special annuals.

Top row
Left: Undated magazine illustration
Middle and Right: illustrations for *West End Review*, 1898.

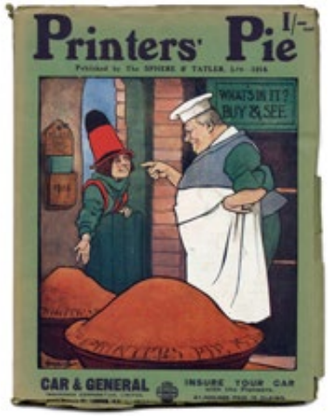
Bottom row:
Left: Undated magazine illustration, probably for *Pierrot*
Right: Pierrot magazine cover, c. 1900. This magazine, which seems to have been short-lived, may have been inspired by an earlier French publication of the same name.

Top row:
Christmas special numbers called for bright, cheerful covers. Hassall's vivid red Father Christmas cover for the *Favorite*, third from left, was reproduced full page in the *Poster* magazine in December 1899.

Bottom row:
'The Ambuscade'. Preliminary sketch and published illustration in an unidentified magazine *c.* 1910. Small boys making mischief with snow offered endless inspiration and was a subject Hassall returned to again and again in his magazine and book work.

Top row:
Hulton's Christmas Magazine, 1908. Preliminary sketch and published cover.

Bottom row:
Christmas catalogue cover designs for Edmonds Bros., of Wood Green in north London, 1926 and 1931.



Top: Printers' Pie and *Winter's Pie* were published by Hugh Spottiswoode in aid of printers' charities. Hassall's bold and jolly covers, featuring characters that always looked well-fed (on pie!), gave the publication its distinctive look. When the enterprise was formed into a company in 1911 to ensure it could continue its charitable work in the event of Spottiswoode's death, Hassall was appointed as one of the trustees.

Bottom: Photograph from the *Tatler*, 20 June 1906, of artistic and literary contributors to *Printers' Pie* lined up for a photograph at a special dinner given at the Savoy Hotel by Hugh Spottiswoode. Hassall can be seen centre back row, while second from left in the middle row, is a young H.M. Bateman, who would have been just nineteen at the time.

Despite his very British style, Hassall was known and admired internationally. He exhibited his paintings abroad, had some of his books translated into other languages, and, in this case, his work appeared on the covers of magazines overseas.

Left: Arena magazine, December 1907. *Arena* was a German magazine, published by Rudolf Presber in Stuttgart.

Right: Comica magazine, October 1908 (date obscured). Hassall is given a prominent credit on the cover of this French magazine.

Top: 'A New Use for Traction Engines: A Holiday for Refugee Children at Maritzburg', the *Graphic*, 5 May 1900. Hassall's reportage illustration from the Second Boer War tended to record the lighter side of war and would have been based on eyewitness accounts, sketches provided by 'specials' or photographs.

Bottom left: 'The Princess of Wales in the East End', the *Sketch*, 30 April 1902.

Bottom right: 'Inter-varsity football match at Queen's Club last Saturday', the *Sketch*, 22 February 1902.

THE PRINCESS OF WALES IN THE EAST-END.

THE INTER-VARSITY ASSOCIATION MATCH AT QUEEN'S CLUB LAST SATURDAY.

Top left: 'After the Gale. Gathering sticks in the New Forest', the *Sketch*, 30 September 1903. Published shortly after spending his honeymoon near Lyndhurst in the New Forest, Hassall, always working, would have drawn this from life.

Bottom left: 'How Doth the Busy Bee', the *Sketch*, 31 August 1904. The picture is signed 'Dallinghoo, 1904', the Suffolk home of his in-laws, confirming the picture is of his children, Dorothy, Ian and Isabel.

Top right: 'My Life Story', original artwork, published in the *Gentlewoman*, Christmas Number, 1905. Hassall's self-deprecating strip cartoon chronicled his artistic career to date.

Bottom right: 'Home from the Holidays', *Black and White* magazine, 4 October 1902. The Hassall family would go on a seaside holiday every summer. This illustration shows the return of a family to a street that looks very similar to his own London address.

CHAPTER 3

WAR AND POLITICS

When Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914, its population was emerging bleary-eyed from a long bank holiday weekend. On the previous day, Bank Holiday Monday, Hassall had taken a train to Marlborough in Wiltshire, where he had been invited to judge a town crier competition. According to his diary, it rained hard and the event took longer than he anticipated, with the result that he did not arrive home until sometime after 7.00 pm. His diary entry included the inevitably frustrated comment: 'no work done'. The following day, he started work on a large oil painting of the Battle of Bannockburn which had been commissioned by the Kelvingrove Art Gallery in Glasgow. He was 'at it all day' before going out to dinner with friends, one of whom was departing Britain for Argentina. His entry for that day concluded with the words, squashed into the final line as if an afterthought, 'War declared on Germany thank God.'

The brevity of the comment is a little puzzling, but Hassall never used his diary to confide his feelings or views at length. It seems to imply he was relieved that Britain was at war and that the escalating tensions of the past few weeks had reached the correct outcome. It is unlikely that he had any idea of what war would bring, or that, for him personally, it would mark what was probably the busiest period of his life.

The next four years would be spent using his art to help the war effort. Hassall designed a number of recruitment posters, as well as yet more posters in support of various charities set up as a response to the effects of war. He would donate sometimes as much as half of his work for free, as well as give his time visiting hospitals or fundraising events


ILLUSTRATED SUNDAY HERALD.

PEACE—PERFECT PEACE!

John Hassall's Christmas Card For President Wilson.

The only peace that will satisfy the Allies.—Drawn by John Hassall for the Sunday Herald.

Cutting from the *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, December 1917.

to draw pictures that would then be auctioned. His war-themed cartoons appeared in the national press, and he dealt with correspondence from serving soldiers as well as nurses or volunteers at the front, asking for drawings, requests he always tried to fulfil. All this was carried out while serving as a special constable, often during night shifts. As with his routine during peacetime, Hassall continued to work on larger commissions such as *The Morning of Bannockburn*, alongside everything else. Some of his paintings during this time related directly to the war, including one picturing the new, game-changing instrument of battle, the tank. He was commissioned to paint the picture by Sir William Tritton, Managing Director of William Foster & Co. Ltd of Lincoln, and travelled to the factory to make sketches. In between time, he went for a ride in one of the tanks around the firm's testing field and was so impressed that he refused to accept a fee for the painting – one of his many contributions to the war effort. The painting was widely reproduced in the press, and when the factory closed down the painting was given to the Lincoln Corporation. It now hangs in the city's Usher Art Gallery. At another factory in Lincoln, Robey & Co. Ltd, he also made sketches of a seaplane, although according to a Mr John Blake, who had worked as the postboy at Robey's during the war, Hassall did charge for this painting – the grand sum of 100 guineas, the news of which caused a ripple of amazement among the factory staff.

Away from the realism of mechanised warfare, another oil painting from this period, *The Vision of St George Over the Battlefield*, was a full-blown piece of allegorical propaganda in which the mounted figure of England's patron saint shimmers into view over a battlefield on the Western Front, causing the German enemy to turn on its heels, much to the relief of two lone British soldiers in a shallow trench. The subject was a re-working of the Angels of Mons story circulated in the early weeks of the war, claiming a supernatural phenomenon had intervened in favour of the British during the Battle of Mons.

When looking at Hassall's extraordinary workload and output during the Great War, it is easy to overlook the fact he was also an established artist at the time of the Second Boer War, fifteen years earlier. While it would never dominate civilian lives in the same way as the First World War, there was nevertheless intense public interest in the events in South Africa.

National Relief Fund poster by Hassall. The fund was one of the first charities to be established in direct response to the outbreak of war in 1914. Supported by the Prince of Wales, it aimed to provide help to families in poverty as a result of the conflict.

Hassall's work at the time picked up on this. While there were the more typical commissions, such as a programme cover for the *National Bazaar* in aid of Sufferers by the War in May 1900, or an issue of the *Captain* magazine from February that year, with 'Tommy, Jack and their Nursing Sister' as the cover stars, the influence of the war appeared more unexpectedly in other places. In his *Pantomime ABC*, the Fairy Queen is surrounded by caricatures of key personalities of the war, while his poster *Sinbad the Sailor* had Sinbad carrying an old man on his back, whose face clearly belonged to the leader of the Boer cause, Paul Kruger, regularly cast as a pantomime villain during this period.

Between that war and the next, there was another ongoing conflict much closer to home – the fight for women's suffrage. The suffrage movement's high profile at this time owed much to a number of its talented members whose work combined to form a potent visual brand. From posters and song sheets to murals and processional banners, the votes for women campaign harnessed the powers of artists who were either fully affiliated or at least sympathetic to their cause, among them Duncan Grant, Margaret Morris and Sylvia Pankhurst.

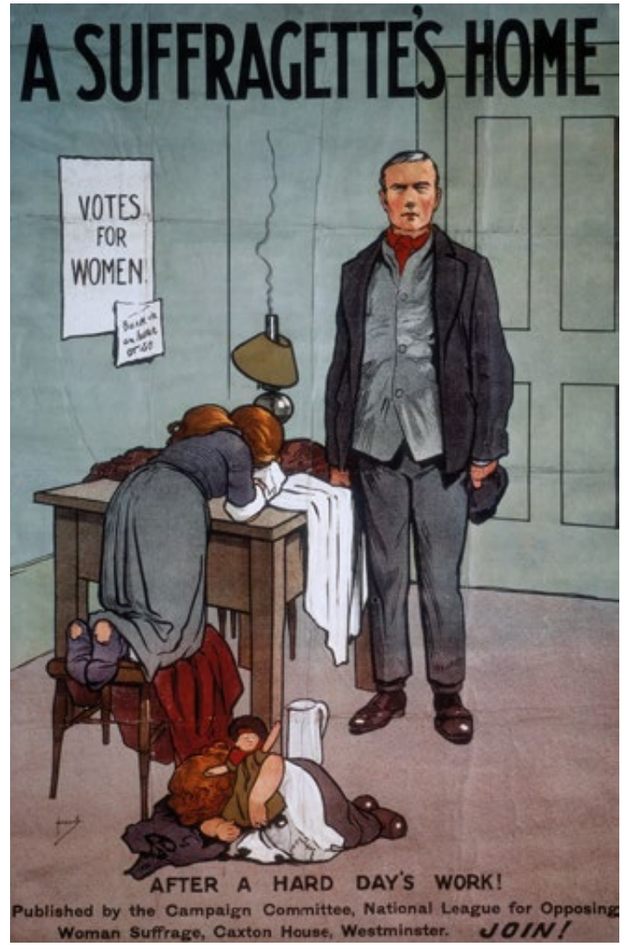
Patriotic cover of the *Captain* magazine during the Second Boer War, February 1900.

In opposition, the anti-suffrage movement's campaign was in general artistically inferior, but it had one big gun in its arsenal in the form of John Hassall, who designed two posters for the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage (NLOWS) in 1912. One, *A Suffragette's Home*, depicted a working man returning home to find his children hungry and his home in disarray. It was an attempt to show how the movement was disrupting the traditional structure of domestic life; the Victorian 'angel of the home' was no longer so angelic when filling her head with politics. His other poster, more in the comic Hassall style, was of a vote-seeking young woman, unkempt, scatty and verging on the hysterical. *Give Me a Vote and See What I'll Do* was reproduced not only as a poster but also as a postcard, along with two other stereotypical depictions of suffragettes by Hassall. Furthermore, the design was adapted as a small, pottery figurine by the German company of Schafer and Vater. It was one of the anti-suffrage campaign's most popular and recognised images.

What Hassall's own views were on the suffrage question is difficult to fathom. There is no firm indication he was against giving women the vote, although, in working for the NLOWS it is easy to assume where his sympathies lay. Maud, however, took an interest in the suffrage movement, and Hassall records in his diary that she once attended one of the big suffrage meetings at the Royal Albert Hall. Might there have been conflict in the Hassall household over this issue? Without clear evidence, it is conjecture to suggest there was. It is likely that this was simply another commission for Hassall where his job was to give the client what it wanted, and in this he succeeded. Certainly, in other areas he was fully supportive of the progression of women, not least in his art school which encouraged its female members to study with a view to obtaining paid work. He also had an odd theory, recorded in the *Weekly Irish Times* (5 December 1908), that the introduction of labour-saving devices in the home (many of which he promoted through his poster designs) would result in women reaching Amazonian proportions in a generation or two:

> By 2008, electricity will have solved the problem of domestic work, the tides will supply us with electricity. Instead of having to work and work, and clean, and scrub, women will merely press an electric button. The result will be that women will give all their time to the cultivation of physique by means of games and athletics. A magnificent race of women will be the result. That women will be six feet tall, will I incline to think, be not at all exceptional in a hundred years.

As is often the case with Hassall, there is the possibility he was joking, but despite this, he had quite prescient views about the future of energy and domestic appliances, even if his theory might fall short by a few inches. There is of course no doubt about which of the sexes he considered should shoulder the burden of housework, but in this he was not unusual for the time.



The suffrage campaign of the 1900s was renowned for its strong branding and design, and the political battle for the vote was accompanied by an artistic one. Hassall's posters for the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage were far superior to most designs the opposition were able to muster. Whether the posters reflected his own opinions is unclear.

A Suffragette's Home poster tried to appeal to the working man, whose domestic sanctuary is breached through his wife's desire for political equality. In another series of posters of 1909–10, Hassall once

Hassall, centre, featured in the *Sketch*, 7 December 1910, alongside Edward Huskinson (left) and G.R. Halkett (right), all at work on posters for the Unionist election campaign.

again reached out to the working man who was in danger of bearing the brunt of radical fiscal policies proposed by the Liberal government. The series of posters was commissioned by the Unionist Party in opposition to the so-called People's Budget of 1909. David Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer in Asquith's government, proposed what he termed a 'war budget', drawn up to wage war against poverty and squalidness. Its long-term objective was to allow planned social reforms, such as the old-age pension, and in so doing, form the foundation of the British welfare state.

To achieve this, Lloyd George proposed raising income tax, with the largest portion of revenue generated through a super tax on the wealthy, which, unsurprisingly, was forcefully rejected in the House of Lords. The issue became one of peers versus the people, in which the Liberals focused on gaining support in working class areas in the run-up to the general election of January 1910. Hassall's posters were designed to re-draw the battle lines, and instead suggested the People's Budget would do as much harm to the ordinary working man as a wealthy one. One poster, for instance, has Robin Hood telling Lloyd George, 'I took from the rich and gave to the poor. YOU ROB BOTH.' A year earlier, another poster by Hassall, criticising Asquith's Licensing Bill, which sought to severely restrict pub licensing laws in Britain in a bid to cure the country of insobriety, depicted Asquith struggling to contain beer erupting from a barrel of 'public opinion'.

Another poster from the same campaign, by Edward Huskinson (who began his career as a political cartoonist but would become editor of the *Tatler*) declared, 'Hands off the Poor Man's Beer: Don't we know when we've had enough. Why should we drink teetotal stuff?' It was another political issue where those with vested interests presented it as an attack on the freedom of the populace. In the end, the combined forces of the brewing industry and Britain's drinkers left Asquith's bill in tatters, but the Unionist campaign against the People's Budget was less successful. The general election kept the Liberals in power and in, April, Lloyd George's bill passed into law, ushering in a new era of social reform in Britain.

Another election followed in December that year. In its 7 December 1910 issue, the *Sketch* magazine featured photographs of Hassall, along with Huskinson and another political poster artist, G.R. Halkett, shown with examples of their posters for the Unionist Party. 'The present General Election is being fought quite as much by "bills" and cartoons as the last,' it commented. The posters were part of a fierce campaign by the Unionist Party to dislodge Asquith and what the Unionists were now calling 'the radical party'. They did not succeed.

Comparatively few of Hassall's political posters survive from this period, although his original sketches for the People's Budget opposition campaign, done on the thin brown paper he used for all his rough conceptual drawings, were preserved by him and remain in his archives at the University of Essex. A handful of the finished, printed versions are in the Conservative Party archives held at the Bodleian Library in Oxford.

Hassall's professionalism and versatility meant he could turn his hand to most subjects, but one suspects the political poster was not his favourite genre. He was always best when able to raise a smile, but even his humorous political posters lack his usual easy directness and feel hampered by the constraints of delivering what was a complicated message. As with his work for the anti-suffrage movement, it is hard to know if the posters he designed reflected his own political stance. They cannot have been diametrically opposed, but Hassall's sympathy for the working man as reflected in his posters seems more than mere lip service. The outbreak of war in 1914 focused his attention on recruitment and fundraising posters, subjects with a clearer purpose, and he seems to have more or less abandoned political posters after the war.

By the time of the Second World War, Hassall was in his seventies. This war did not place the same demands on his time as the previous one, but he was not entirely idle. He created an *Allies ABC Painting Book*, full of delightful characters, including a fisherman not unlike the famous 'Jolly' of Skegness fame. There was a humorous book, *Laffs*, published by James S. Leckie in 1940, with anecdotes by John Ross, which aimed to raise money for comforts for troops overseas and at home. 'The excellent drawings by John Hassall add considerably to the value of the book,' reported the *Stirling Observer*, suggesting he had not lost his touch. A book of lovely illustrations entitled *The Tribulations of a Sentry* was created around this time but never published. Taking as its theme the experiences of doing sentry duty outside Buckingham Palace, Hassall's illustrations depict the various passers-by and their interactions with the long-suffering guardsmen. The quotes and anecdotes were by Charles Berry, but the collaboration may well have reminded Hassall of his own duties as a special constable during the Great War. It is unclear why it was never published, but it is likely the outbreak of war meant many publishing projects were abandoned. The mocked-up book, with its original pen, ink and gouache illustrations, remains preserved in Hassall's archives, a rather poignant reminder that the twilight of his career coincided with a time of tremendous upheaval.

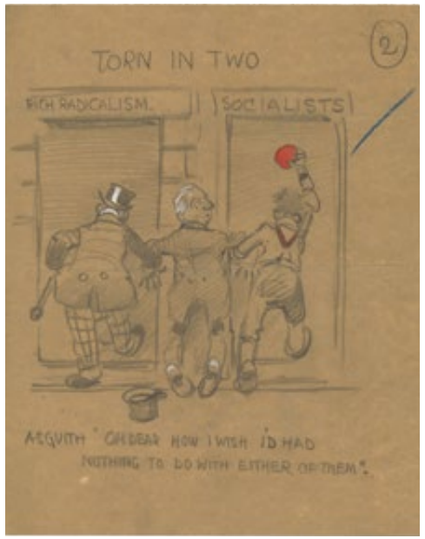
Illustrations depicting various branches of the British Army during the Second Boer War, c. 1900. The pictures were pasted into a scrapbook owned by Hassall and it is not known where they were published, but it is likely to have been in a magazine.

Left: Convalescent Depot Gazette cover by Hassall, c. 1900. Hassall would later design covers for trench newspapers during the First World War.

Right: Reproduction of an advertising poster for Nestlé's Milk, featuring the topical slogan 'Always to the Front'. Hassall used the pose of the soldier in this design as a template for recruiting posters of the First World War.

Opposite: Programme cover for the *National Bazaar in Aid of Sufferers by this War*, May 1900. Hassall would frequently be asked to provide programme cover designs for fundraising events and often featured figures personifying the British Empire.

'Give Me A Vote and See What I'll Do' issued as a poster and a postcard by the National League for Opposing Woman Suffrage c. 1912. The design, along with two others in the series, played on stereotypical views of suffrage campaigners. The image became one of the most successful of the anti-suffrage campaign and was even reproduced as a china figurine.



Left: Hassall's poster design for the Unionist Party's election campaign in 1910. A number of his rough sketches survive in his archives and show how his initial suggestions usually followed through to the completed poster. In this one, even the punchline remains the same as Prime Minister Asquith finds himself torn between two political extremes.

Right: The Licensing Bill of 1908 sought to impose severe restrictions on public houses in a bid to tackle the nation's widespread drink problem. There was a national outcry against the proposal with the brewing industry swinging its weight behind the campaign. Hassall was commissioned, along with others, to design posters opposing the bill, which was eventually defeated.

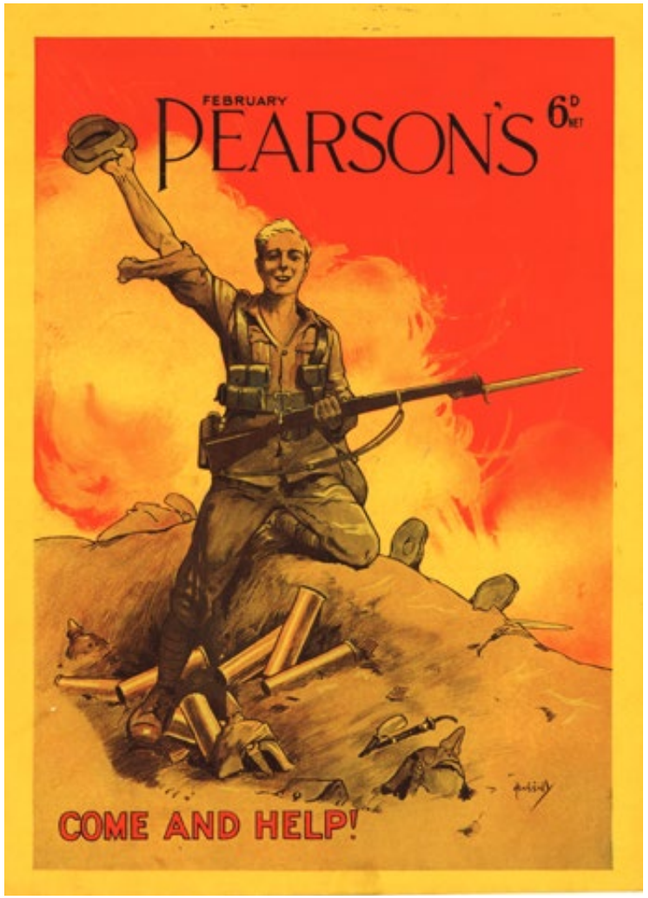
Posters and the corresponding rough sketches by Hassall for the Unionist Party's campaign to oppose David Lloyd George's budget of 1909. The so-called People's Budget sought to levy taxes against the wealthy in order to fund progressive social welfare schemes, including the Old Age Pension, but the opposition claimed the budget would also harm the finances of the honest, working man. The Bill passed into law in April 1910, laying the foundation for the welfare state.

Top left: A Hassall illustration for the music sheet cover published by Chappell & Co. Ltd, of one of Britain's most well-known Great War recruiting songs, written by Paul Rubens in 1914.

Top right: Before the First World War, Britain had relied on imports from Australia, New Zealand and South America for large amounts of its wool. Hostilities impacted these imports and with wool in huge demand as the nation turned to knitting 'comforts' for the troops, the British Dogs' Wool Association encouraged dog owners to collect pet hair to be spun into wool. Hassall's poster specially appeals to residents of Kensington.

Bottom left: Poster for the Belgian Canal Boat Fund, c. 1914–1915. The charity aimed to deliver food and clothing by boat to Belgian families trapped behind the fighting lines.

Bottom right: Cover for *A V.A.D. in France* by Olive Dent, published by Grant Richards, 1917. Dent was a schoolteacher who joined the Voluntary Aid Detachment and served on the Western Front for two years.



Top left: Pearson's magazine cover, undated. Hassall's drawing echoed his Nestlé's Milk advertisement of the Boer War period and was used on several posters bearing different slogans. Hassall told the journalist, W. Pollock, 'I am doing a good many special war posters for the military authorities – but part of the secret of this public display of come-and-be-a-soldier pictures of mine lies in the fact that several posters which I did at the time of the Boer War have been revived. I may as well be perfectly frank and honest in the matter.'

Right: Poster for Charmy's (c. 1918), a Church Army restaurant near Marble Arch in London run by Lady Bagot. It was one of the most popular soldiers' clubs in London.

Bottom left: Pin badge for the Ivory Cross Fund by Hassall. He also designed a poster for the fund which helped provided dental treatment to those serving in the armed forces. Flag Days, when flags or badges were sold to raise money, proliferated during the First World War. As well as designing this one, Hassall was a great collector of the flags, and his collection, pinned on to a wall in his studio, was often remarked upon.

Top row:
Left: 'May We Have Huts Too?' Poster for the Young Women's Christian Association, August 1918. One of many designs done by Hassall without charge.

Middle: Poster for fundraising concert organised by George Robey at the Alhambra. St Dunstan's Home, founded by the publisher Sir Arthur Pearson who was himself blind, rehabilitated soldiers and sailors who had lost their sight.

Right: Front cover of the *Ex-Service Man* magazine, *c.* 1919.

Bottom row:
Left: Poster for British League of Help for the Devastated Area of France (1918) featuring a familiar slogan for present times – 'Every little helps'.

Middle: 'The secret of a recruiting poster is the secret of every poster: it must be arresting.' (Hassall in a transcript of an interview, 1914 or 1915). This poster was also printed with alternative slogans.

Right: Poster for the Blue Cross Fund, which raised funds to provide veterinary care for horses and dogs used by the armed forces during the war, *c.* 1918.

Top: The Vision of St George Over the Battlefield, oil on canvas painted in 1915. The painting is now part of the Imperial War Museum art collection.

Bottom: A Tank in Action, oil painting by Hassall commissioned in 1917 by William Foster & Co. Ltd of Lincoln. Specialising in agricultural engineering, the company was tasked with developing an armoured vehicle which in time would give the Allies an upper hand in breaking the stalemate on the Western Front. Hassall visited the works and was taken for a ride in a tank before beginning the painting. The original now hangs in the Usher Art Gallery in Lincoln while a copy can be seen at the Tank Museum in Bovington.

Ye Berlyn Tapestrie published by the *Studio* in December 1915. Hassall had great fun creating this concertina-folded book, a pastiche of the Bayeux Tapestry re-drawn to poke fun at the despicable actions of the Kaiser and his German army. Hassall's eleven-year-old daughter, Joan, helped to fill in some of the red in the original illustrations.

In 1915, Hassall designed 'Bow-Wow', a lucky mascot combining the mighty British bulldog sitting and crushing the German eagle. The figure was reproduced as a paperweight, a car mascot and also in a smaller size in silver and gold by the jeweller, Badcoe and Hanks of Holborn. The war triggered a craze for good luck charms, and Hassall's was endorsed by leading members of society including Lady Randolph Churchill.

Dawn, pencil drawing by Hassall, undated.

'The Flying Baby-Killers', a Hassall newspaper cartoon, possibly from the *Evening Standard*, which very likely references the daylight air raid over London of 13 June 1917, when Upper North Street School in Poplar in London's East End was bombed by a German Gotha aeroplane. Eighteen children were killed.

St David's Day, London Welsh Flag Day poster, 1918. A pared back and striking design by Hassall.

'Yes, it is true that I am pretty busy doing posters designed to draw men to the colours, but it is not true, as has been boldly stated in print, that they have obligingly turned the War Office into a studio for me. It is just as well to make this point clear, isn't it?' Hassall in a transcribed interview, 1914 or 1915. An early recruitment poster by Hassall referencing the appeal by Lord Roberts, Britain's former Commander-in-Chief, who died during a visit to the Front in November 1914.

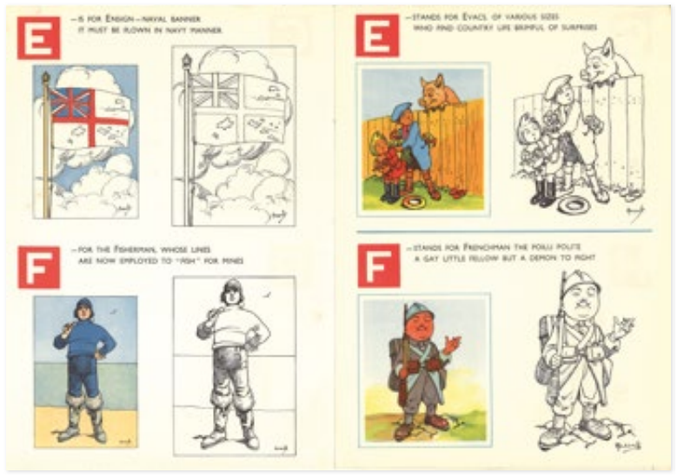
Hassall designed this children's painting book in the autumn of 1914 in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund. Each page featured a picture to colour, sponsored by different companies. Examples here show Harbutt's Plasticine, Schweppes and *London Opinion* magazine. The press reported that the book had the approval of the Belgian Minister.

Left: The First World War prompted a slew of books published in aid of war charities, often under the name of a royal figure, in this case, the daughter of King Albert I of the Belgians. This joyful cover by Hassall was for a book published by Cassell & Company in 1916 in aid of the Vestiaire Marie-José, which provided milk and clothing to babies and small children stranded behind the firing line in Flanders.

Top right: A small card for the Anzac Buffet at 90 Victoria Street in London, featuring a lovely illustration by Hassall. The Anzac Buffet offered a place of refuge in London for Australian soldiers where, reported the *Gentlewoman* magazine in 1918, 'they can find Australian society in an Australian atmosphere, together with comfort, entertainment and hospitality'.

Bottom right: Follow the Drum, 1915, a poster asking for subscriptions in support of marching bands, one method used to literally drum up recruits. Hassall wrote to the author and academic Douglas Sladen on 28 June 1915, apologising for not being able to make a meeting at the Mansion House, but adding, 'I shall be only too pleased to do as you suggest a Drummer design for a poster. I'll do a good one – but it'll take a day or so.'

Left: Laffs, written by John Ross, and published in 1940 to raise money for comforts for troops. Hassall provided the cover and the cartoons inside.



Right and opposite bottom: By the time of the Second World War, Hassall's workload had decreased considerably. However, he reprised the alphabet formula for this painting book, which, through a delightful cast of characters (including a fisherman in the Skegness vein) demonstrates he still retained his strong and engaging illustrative style.

Two original illustrations from *The Tribulations of a Sentry*, created around 1940, but never published.

CHAPTER 4

BRANDS, GOODS AND SHOPPING

A poster must please, and it must also do what it is intended to do – that is to tempt. – Newspaper cutting in the John Hassall archives.

John Hassall had the good fortune to embark on his career as a commercial artist during a consumer boom. By the end of the nineteenth century, Britain's overseas trade and its fundamental belief in free trade saw British-made goods sold in every corner of the world. From ship-building to ceramics to textile manufacture, Britain's factories were churning out goods not only for foreign markets but also for its own expanded and increasingly affluent middle class who wished to fill their homes and stock their larders with purchases from a wide array of grocery and domestic products. Huge department stores, temples to consumerism, came to characterise modern retail, elevating the mere purchase of necessities into an art and turning shopping into a leisure experience.

The choices shoppers made in what to buy were decided in part by the power and persuasion of advertisers. Pick up any illustrated magazine from the end of the nineteenth century and witness the densely packed pages crammed with advertisements, urging readers to invest in myriad products such as Hindes hair curlers, Paterson's Camp Coffee, Huntley & Palmer's biscuits or Ellimans Universal Embrocation. The poster hoardings, too, reflected this extraordinarily intense courtship of the Victorian consumer.

Shortly after establishing his reputation with theatre posters, Hassall began to secure commissions from manufacturers of food and domestic products for advertising their goods. The *Poster* devoted an article, written by Lewis Hornby, to the newly launched *Grocery* magazine in its October 1899 issue, which claimed to have the largest circulation of any trade journal for its first issue. *Grocery* devoted several pages each month to posters and show cards issued by companies whose goods were sold in grocers, with several examples reproduced in the *Poster*, including two

Left: Poster for Royal Coffee & Tea, 1899, singled out for comment by the *Poster* magazine, which admired the pretty woman who, 'looks amazingly well in her warm garments of reddish brown.'

designs by Hassall, one for Original Royal Baking Powder and another for Royal Coffee and Tea, both printed by David Allen & Sons.

'There is, however, no doubt that of all poster artists, John Hassall has been the most successful with advertisers in the Grocery trade,' wrote Hornby, who also singled out Hassall's posters for Colman's as prime examples of excellence in the genre. Colman's, described as 'the largest manufacturer in the world' by Frank Cutler in the December 1899 issue of the *Poster*, had its own art department under the management of Charles Clowes, which had 'done so much to beautify the hoardings with artistic posters by enlisting the services of the leading English poster artists. Some of Mr. Hassall's finest designs have been executed for Colman's Mustard.' He went on to add that Hassall considered his first poster for Colman's, of a young woman walking through a bright yellow field of mustard flowers, his masterpiece in posters, 'although he has been exceedingly happy in some of the conceptions of his later designs for the same commodity'.

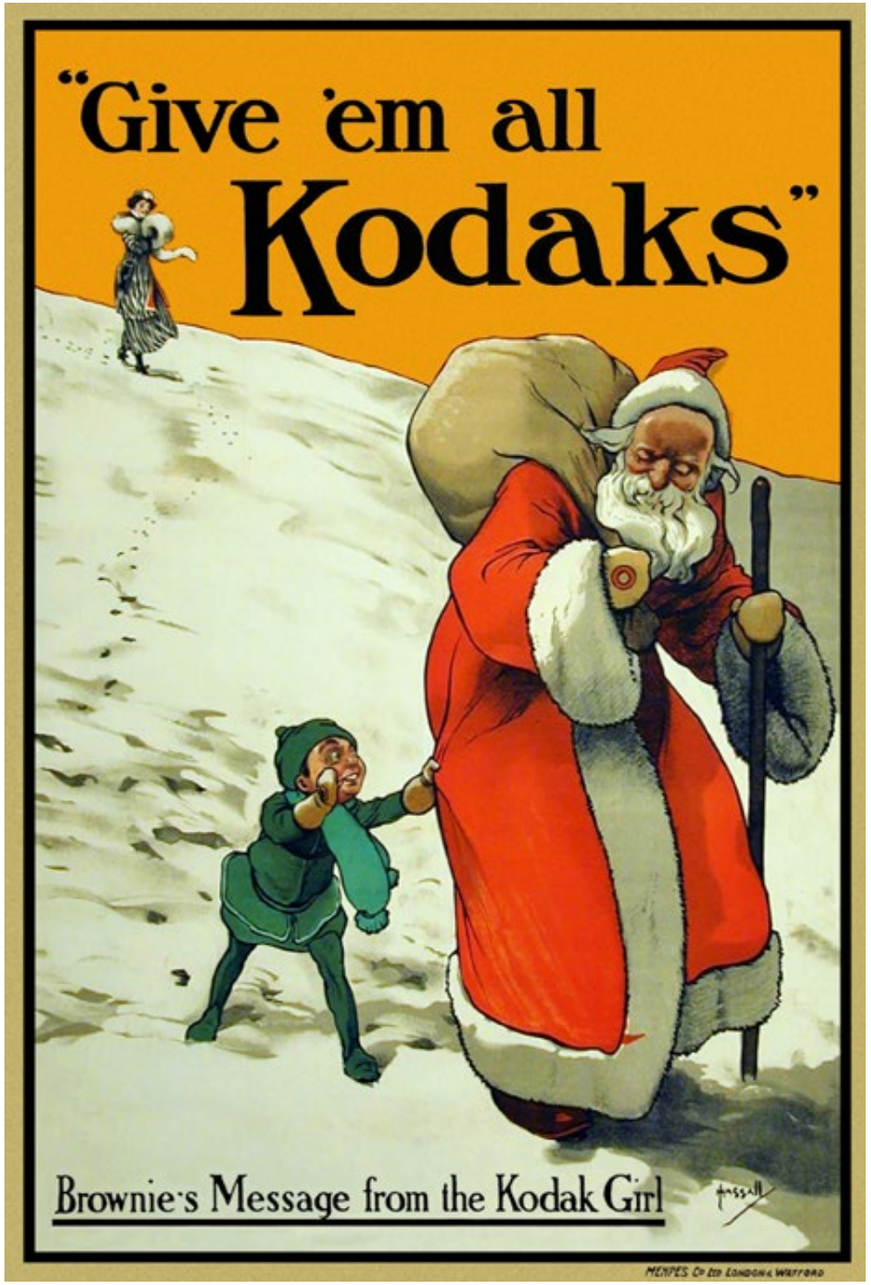
Colman's was just one firm among many that sought out Hassall to work his magic on their products. He would carry out work for some of the world's leading brands and companies, including OXO, Kodak, Sunlight, Crosse & Blackwell, Shredded Wheat and Nestlé, all of which still exist. Displayed the length and breadth of the country, these were the posters that made John Hassall a household name and turned him into something of a guru on the subject of poster design. What was the secret of his success? Many journalists who interviewed Hassall were keen to know.

Hassall would reel off a checklist of qualities: strong draughtsmanship, good colour sense, simplicity of lettering and 'some practical appreciation of selling', but, above all, 'a jolly good idea, decoratively carried out', according to one interview in the *Daily Telegraph* (undated). Moreover, he never forgot the fundamental objective. He told George Edgar, who interviewed him for *Modern Business* magazine (undated):

> However artistic the poster is, the main fact should not be lost to sight – that it must influence people to buy.

Whatever the psychological triggers that prompted shoppers to buy a certain item, a Hassall poster seemed to identify them. The cast

Below: This Colman's Starch advertisement is an example of Hassall abandoning his flat colours and adopting a more realistic approach.



Most online biographies of Hassall mention his 'Kodak girl' posters and Percy Bradshaw also lists Hassall as one of numerous artists who drew her. However, a poster generally attributed to Hassall is almost certainly not his and if he did design a Kodak Girl poster, then what it looks like is a mystery. This Christmas-themed poster, c. 1913–14, printed by Menpes Ltd does, however, feature the girl in her striped dress in the distance.

of characters he used in his advertising – the wily tramps and bawling babies, ruddy farmers and comely milkmaids, myopic professors and wide-eyed schoolboys – were drawn with a warmth and charm that was irresistible. Even though he was well-known for using humour in his posters, Hassall was also aware that this was not necessarily appropriate in all cases. 'Some things should be advertised humorously, some daintily, some dignified, decorative treatments,' he explained.

Hassall had developed a direct, robust style for poster work that was naturally suited to the hoarding; he simply knew that too much detail or delicacy could be the death of a poster design. in April 1914, at a lecture given at the Kingsway Hall in Holborn by W.S. Rogers, the poster artist and advertising manager at William Cooper & Nephews, Hassall was in the chair and explained why subtle colour schemes, such as those evident in the Academician paintings sometimes used in advertisements, were akin to resorting to camouflage: 'at Hayling Island and Shoeburyness, when guns and limber had to be disguised, they were painted with all sorts of colours and at 200 yards they were quite invisible'.

Hassall also had strong views on lettering, passionately believing that the more lettering on a poster, the more directly it was proportionate to its ineffectiveness. In this, he often clashed with the views of his clients, who he felt did not understand the fundamental principles of poster design, often venting his frustrations in interviews. He told the *Daily Telegraph*:

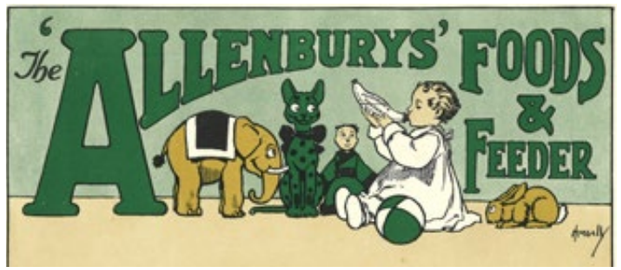
> The people who buy the posters should really try to visualise them as they appear on the hoardings. Too much lettering is bad from the point of view of the advertisement as well as the artistic standpoint.

In *Pearson's Weekly* (16 March 1905), he exclaimed:

> On the Continent, the artist as I have said, works with a free hand, in England he toils in shackles. I do not wish to grumble at people by whom I earn a large part of my income, but the unfairness of the advertiser to the poster artist is a subject on which I feel strongly.

To supplement his argument, his were among the most frequently reproduced designs in the *Poster* magazine's regular

A personal comment by Hassall on the creative differences between artist and client, from the *Sketch*, 10 January, 1906.



Advertisements (this page and opposite) designed for Allenburys' Foods and Feeder, and Plasmon Cocoa, Oats and Biscuits, just two appearing in the *Happy Annual*, 1907. The Plasmon advertisement can be seen in three stages from the initial pencil sketch to finished colour printer's proof.

feature, 'Some Rejected Posters', and he even secured a series in the *Sketch*, which allowed him the satisfaction of knowing that even if his clients had not wanted his designs, they could instead be appreciated by the wider public.

A lesser artist might have found such behaviour detrimental to his order book, but proof of the success of Hassall's method was there for all to see. According to Percy Bradshaw in his article 'The Art of John Hassall', published in the *Poster* in 1927, one firm confessed that a Hassall poster doubled its business in a year. Of an advertisement he created for the mid-range furniture company, David Drage & Sons, discussed in his interview in *Modern Business* magazine, Edgar suggested the design, which featured an idiotic-looking figure, was criticised for not reflecting the true nature of the business. Hassall countered the claim swiftly: 'The fact remains, people liked it, talked about it and it brought business … . One can stick to the ordinary aspects of the trade subject too closely, but my experience is that the humorous poster, if it is in good taste, always counts.' Hassall subscribed to the old adage that all publicity is good publicity.

Always creative and looking for new avenues to explore, Hassall's advertising work often went in other directions. There was his foray into electrified, moving adverts as a director of the Animated Hoardings Company prior to the First World War. There were also magazine advertisements, leaflets, brochure covers, inserts and show cards, not to mention projects that gave an editorial format a commercial spin. For Colman's and for Nestlé he created small picture books, such as the *The Foolish Little Frog* by Percy French, containing subliminal advertising slogans on each page for the former, and *El Libra de Animales*, in Spanish, for the latter, a reminder that Hassall's commercial art had an overseas audience as well. In the *Happy Annual* (1907), a collaboration between himself and Cecil Aldin, among the stories and pictures were advertisements designed by him for products such as Plasmon milk powder, Wright's Coal Tar Soap, Cremalto food supplement, Rudge Whitworth bicycles and Allenburys baby foods, all designed in a child-friendly fashion with illustrations of nursery rhyme characters, toys and mischievous little boys. It was a sophisticated piece of commercial enterprise targeted at the younger generation.

Hassall also created an interesting series of advertorials for Boots the Chemist, a well-known patron of art and design, which took the unlikely theme of 'Milestones in the History of the People'. Topics covered included the Magna Carta of 1215, habeas corpus, the Reform Act of 1832, the Education Act of 1870 and the Penny Post. Hassall's illustrations were reproduced in the press and in four-page leaflets given away in-store, with the story of each historical milestone told on the cover, while inside various Boots preparations were listed. In December 1913, the front cover of the *Daily Mail* was taken up with a large Boots advertisement ("The Largest Christmas Present Emporium in the World'), while Hassall provided some festive decoration with a border of elfish figures in his trademark historical tunics and pointed hats pulling a Yule log.

Hassall preserved many of the rough sketches that formed the basis of his finished works. When asked how he came up with ideas for his posters, he claimed that often he approached the drawing board with no clear concept in mind, but within minutes of drawing a few lines, his idea began to take shape. Those rough sketches, even in their unfinished form, show his famed draughtsmanship and convey the rapidity with which his mind worked, but, more than anything, in their rawness encapsulate what made him such a great poster artist. This was summarised by Alys Eyre Macklin in *Pearson's* magazine in 1916:

> Always simple and absolutely explicit, you not only see clearly what he means, but you see it at once. Another very individual gift is the way in which Hassall suggests character by a single line.

In advertising agencies of more recent times, client campaigns are managed by creative teams, the members of which have different specialities. Some will write copy and formulate the concept; others will work on design or production. Hassall was the complete package, both conceptualising and designing campaigns for clients. Sometimes a slogan or idea might be supplied by the client or he would be given a specific brief, but as many letters to Hassall attest, it seems most companies were happy to leave the choice of subject in his capable hands.

Hassall's pre-eminence in the advertising poster lasted from the mid-1890s to the First World War. Even beyond that he continued to design posters, despite the arrival of younger designers and more modern ideas. In his

'The New Craze for Artistic Posters', *St. Paul's* magazine, 6 June 1896. Guests at a party treated to a private view of the host's poster collection, when poster collecting was at the height of fashion and Hassall was beginning to make his mark as a poster artist. The magazine reported that enthusiasts were giving up large rooms for the purpose of properly displaying posters, which were mounted on canvas and could be rolled up and down like ordinary blinds. Note that the posters shown here are all advertising food and other branded goods.

1927 article in the *Poster*, Bradshaw made a good attempt to unpick the secret of Hassall's success:

> His clean, bold outlines and bold, flat colour-washes combined to make a message as definite, explicit and clear as any form of pictorial expression possibly could be. And there was, in the work, a cheery, friendly quality, a chumminess which was in itself appealing … . No one drew those circular eye balls, those surprised eyebrows, the round button noses, the cosy mufflers, the boots with their spots of high-light and the bold cast of shadow beneath the toes, before Hassall introduced them … . Hassall's designs were never mere pictures; they always emphasised cleverly the character of the product, and they always suggested that the product had a human interest and value.

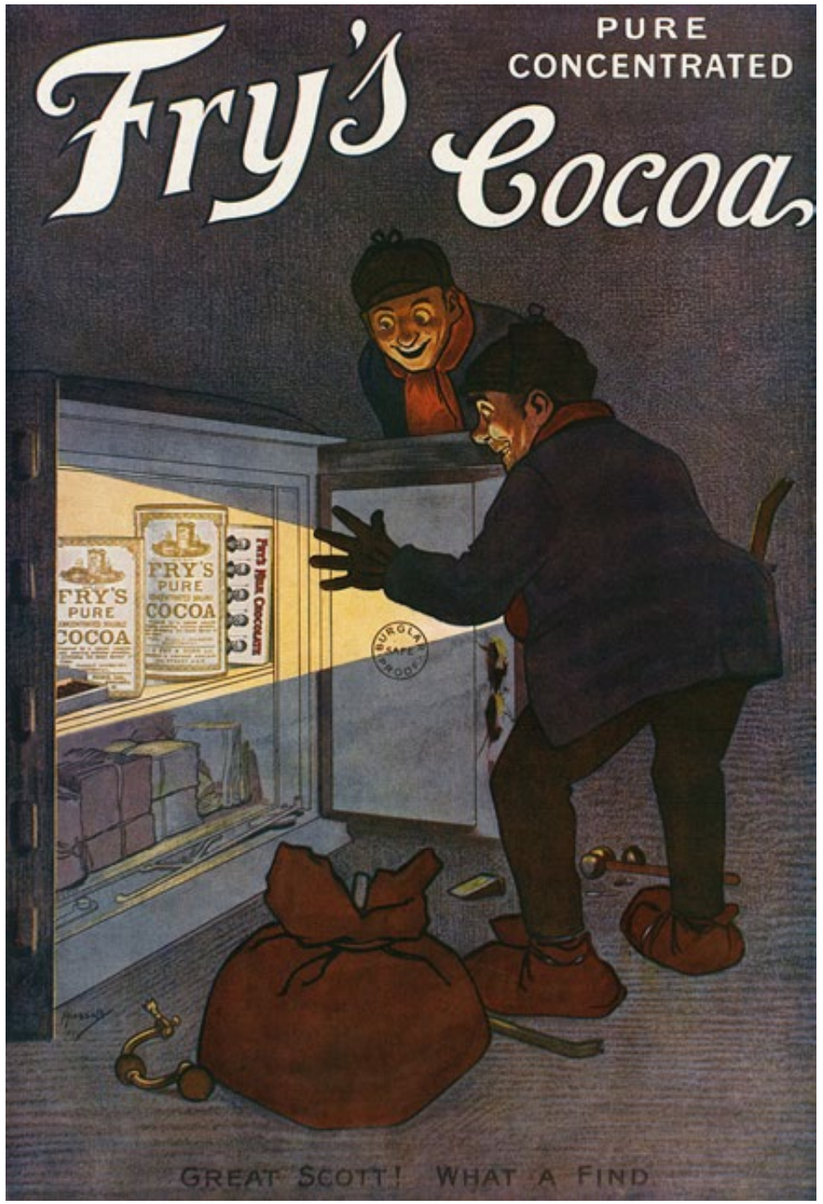
It is rare to find a Hassall poster devoid of people. If there are no people, then he might instead draw some jolly cats or quizzical dogs. Occasionally, Hassall pictures the people in his posters as god-like and dignified, but these were in the main reserved for his theatre designs or those advertising exhibitions or pageants. Many of the figures populating his advertising posters are ordinary types – an exaggerated version of ordinary, perhaps, but nevertheless recognisable to the people hurrying past the hoardings. The root of Hassall's artistic salesmanship was that he created something with which the public could identify, and by giving them a version of themselves, he also gave them something they could trust.

Nestlé's Milk: Always Sweet and Fresh. A solitary figure, an otherwise unpopulated, fairly plain background and contrasting colour choices; one of Hassall's most effective formulas also used in some of his travel posters.

Printer's proofs of a series of advertisements for OXO, *c.* 1900.

Sketch, 1900s, for an advertisement for *Farine Lactée* (flour with milk) developed by the German-born pharmacist, Henri Nestlé in 1867 as an alternative food for infants who could not be breastfed. The product was one of a handful that formed the foundation of the food and drinks giant.

Preparatory sketch of a boy scout used to advertise Orange Bliss drink, dating this design to 1908 onwards. Hassall also designed an advertisement for Veritas in 1910, featuring a boy scout accidentally smashing a light with his signal flag.



Great Scott! What a Find. Hassall's advertisement for Fry's Cocoa, found hidden in a safe by burglars, was widely reproduced in illustrated magazines such as the *Tatler* around 1908.

Top left: *Nevill's Bread – Irresistible*, show card or window display poster, undated. Note the appearance again of the Hassall white dog.

Top right: *A Funny Biscuit*, advertisement for Shredded Wheat, *c.* 1926.

Bottom left: *Golden Fleece Margarine*. Poster, *c.* 1900.

Bottom right: *Shaw's Limerick Bacon & Hams*. Poster for W. J. Shaw & Sons, of Ireland, 1900, printed by James Walker & Co., Dublin. The *Poster* in its October 1900 issue declared, 'John Hassall has undoubtedly succeeded in producing a poster, the excellence of which is shown in its conception, colouring and general effect.'

Top left: As near perfection as possible. Poster for the brewers John Kenyon Ltd, printed by Kingsway Press. The white dog, of indeterminate breeding, pictured here alongside a man watching a picnic taking place, was a frequent inclusion in Hassall's advertising, magazine and book illustrations.

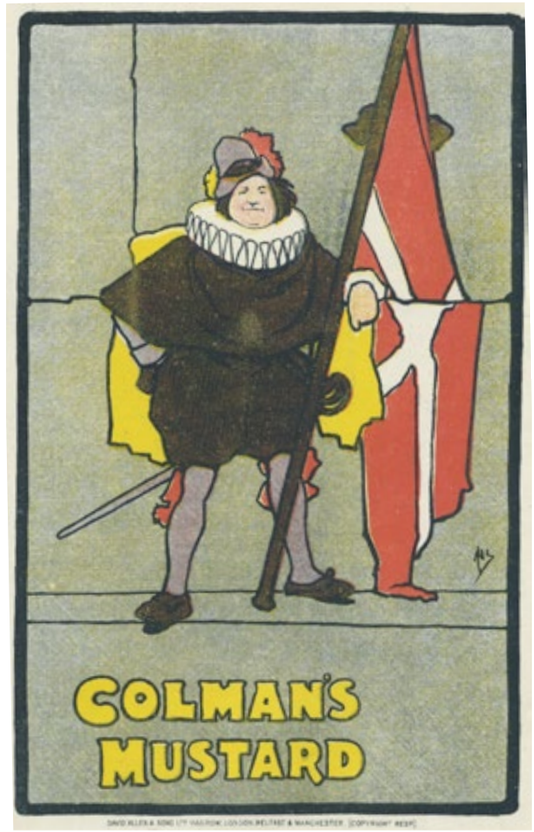
Top right: Summers' Soda Water. Poster, *c.* 1910, for William Summers & Co., the Bristol-based manufacturer of mineral waters and aerated drinks, in business between 1835 and 1920.

Bottom: Flag Cigarettes. Poster, for W.D. & H.O. Wills, *c.* 1900, featuring sailors and soldiers engaged in a tug o' war match.

Left: Treasure Trove. Original watercolour destined to advertise an unidentified whisky brand.

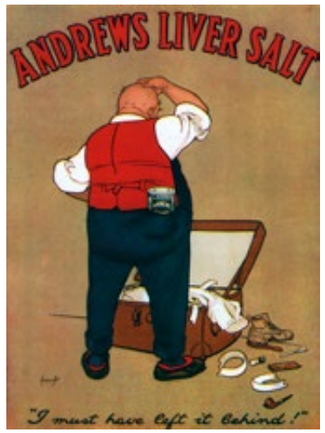
Top right: Say When. Rough preliminary drawing, possibly for a drinks company. An example of Hassall's humorous, if sometimes contrary, method of visual salesmanship.

Bottom right: W.A.T.S.O.N.S MY BOY. Preliminary sketch for a whisky advertisement, undated.



Hassall's posters and advertisements for Colman's of Norwich, done between 1898 and 1899, were among some of his most successful early designs and were widely praised.

No Tips!! Zotos has done for me!!! Hassall's posters for Zotos sea-sickness remedy leaves the steward on a ship's deck in charge of handing out bowls and mopping up after ill passengers, sadly out of pocket (1900s).



I Must Have Left it Behind! poster for Andrews Liver Salt, 1924, printed by J. Weiner, London. It was one of Hassall's most popular advertising posters from this later period and was reproduced on postcards and a set of playing cards.

You've got the hump! You want Beecham's Pills! calendar, 1910. The longevity of calendars, lasting a whole twelve months, and their decorative potential, made them a useful and practical branded promotional tool.

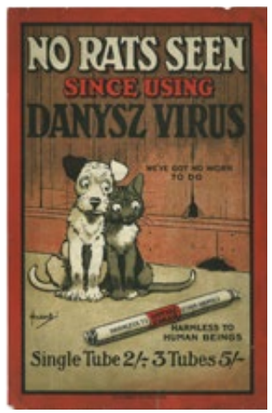
The Very Thing advertisement for Mother Seigel's Syrup (a cure-all for indigestion and other complaints) published on the back cover of *Mother Seigel's Almanac & Home Companion*, 1915.

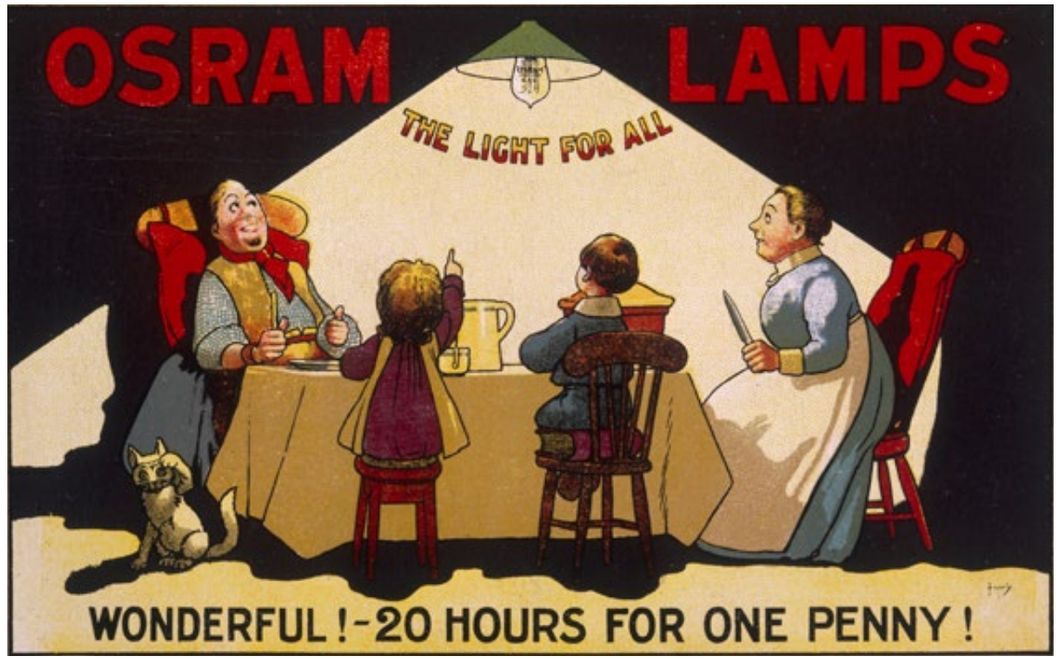
Left: Don't need specs with Osrams Original artwork, pen, ink and gouache for Osram Lamps. Hassall worked on this commission in April 1913, and noted in his diary that 'A.E. Horne [Adam E. Horne 1883–1955) came to do the lettering.'

Right: I wish I had an Onoto! Printer's proof, unlettered, for Onoto self-filling safety fountain pen. Advertisement in the *Happy Annual*, 1907.

Top row: Veritas Mantles for Strength and Brilliancy. Hassall's original poster for Veritas Mantles, *c.* 1910, was an instant hit. His follow-up in 1920 once again features his little white dog in a supporting role.

Bottom row: A trio of less glamorous products given the Hassall treatment: *'Dusmo' The Dustless Sweeping Powder, Cooper's Dip – The Happy Shepherd* (poster, printed by William Cooper & Nephews), and a smaller advertising show card for *Danysz Virus*, a preparation designed to kill vermin. The 'Dusmo' poster was credited to John Hassall Designs Company, therefore dating it to 1913 or 1914.





Top: Osram Lamps – The Light for All, trade card, *c.* 1910. Hassall's cheery, chummy style was perfect for creating cosy domestic scenes.

Bottom left: The Hartford Shock Absorbers, poster, *c.* 1905.

Bottom right: The Hackney Furnishing Company, advertisement, *c.* 1910.

IN FOCUS

HELP! THE BRITISH VACUUM CLEANER COMPANY LTD

Hassall's idea for promoting Hubert Cecil Booth's British Vacuum Cleaner Company's new dust-sucking machines in 1906 not only presented a bizarrely comic and memorable scenario but, more subliminally, recognised the conflicted feelings about the arrival of electric domestic appliances in the home. The machine was time-saving, certainly, but nonetheless it was viewed with a hesitant suspicion by those who were used to more traditional methods of cleaning. Hassall recalled the poster's success in an article entitled 'Humour in Business' in the *Daily News and Leader* (undated):

> The value of a humorous drawing is the same as the value of a good story: it gets talked about and it is remembered. For showing the nozzle of the Cleaner appearing like a prehistoric monster at the window whilst the astonished domestic is flying from it, shouting 'Help!' The design caught on at once and was followed by another showing the same girl cuddling the instrument and the words, 'Friends'.

It was a clever notion: one advertisement that recognised the threat, and a sequel to show that the machines could, in fact, live in perfect harmony with humans without upsetting the status quo.

The advertisement was, indeed, a talking point and would provide a template for other artists to use in a variety of satirical scenarios – always the mark of an advertisement's success. Hassall's contemporary, Will Owen, even made 'Help!' the subject of a humorous cartoon published in the *Tatler* in the spring of 1906.

Left: The original poster designed by Hassall in 1906. The gauche, saucer-eyed housemaid was a stock-in-trade character for Hassall, and she crops up frequently elsewhere, particularly in his humorous magazine illustrations.

Right: Friends, Hassall's sequel to the hugely popular *Help!* advertisement of 1909.

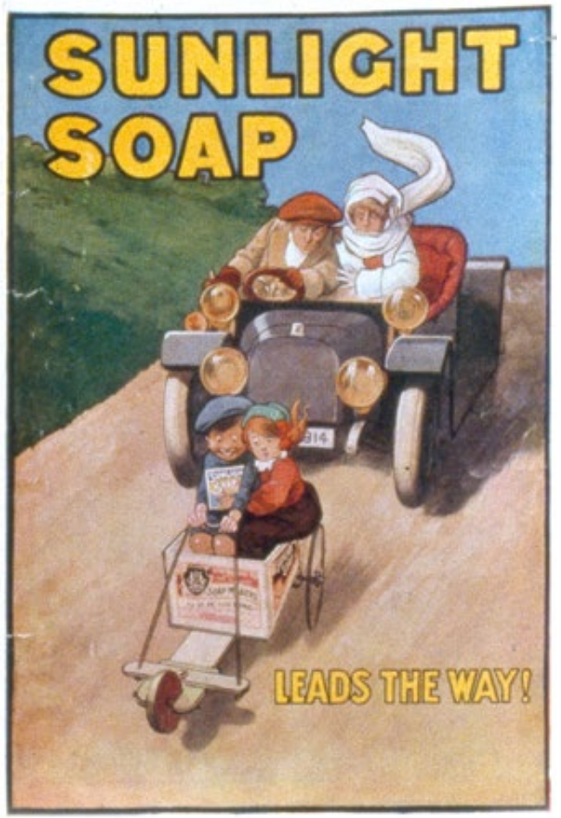
'Hassall's well-known poster for the Vacuum Cleaner came in for a good deal of copying by cartoonists during May,' reported the *Progressive Advertising and Outdoor Publicity* magazine in 1906, adding, 'The Vacuum Cleaner people are certainly getting a good deal of free advertising out of Hassall's clever idea.' The various pastiches and parodies were gathered together in a booklet entitled, *Help!*, published proudly by the printers, Hill, Siffken & Co. Eight years after the original poster, the British Vacuum Cleaner Company was still anxious to secure Hassall's services, writing to ask him for further ideas in a letter which today is preserved in his archives.

The vacuum cleaner, no longer a threat, depicted as an easy-to-use aid to domestic chores. Wealthy families were keen to adopt this new technology, which was an asset when it came to retaining servants (date unknown).

Homage to Hassall's poster by Will Owen in the *Tatler*, 4 April 1906.

For soap and other household products, Hassall generally drew from a stock of domestic servants for his advertisements and posters. The stout, ruddy cook or washerwoman was a familiar figure in his work for Sunlight Soap (opposite) and stoves. It is interesting that his rough sketch, intended for Richmond Gas Cookers, according to his annotations, is a variation on a finished postcard design for John Wright & Company, no doubt an example of his recycling ideas in order to keep up with the stream of commissions.

A younger version of a laundress used for Hudson's Super Soap. The illustration on the right seems to be a sample advertisement, perhaps done in connection with his teaching at his art school.

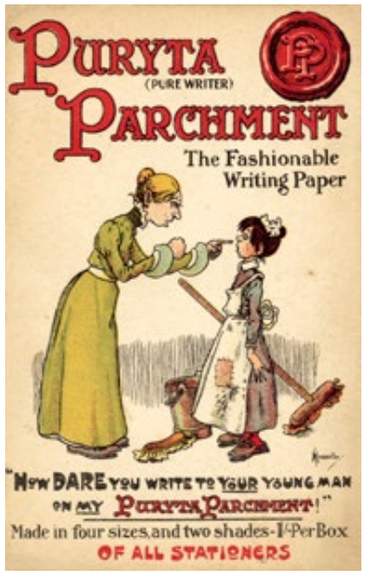


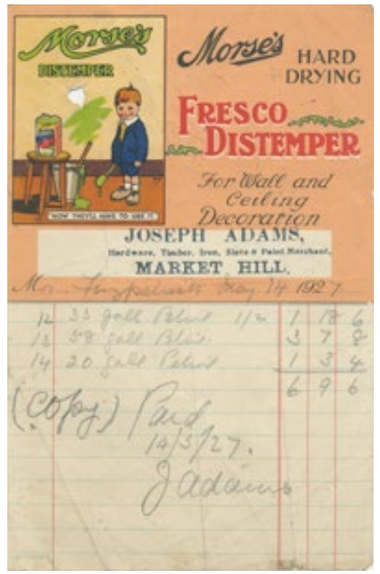
Sunlight Soap was one of the behemoth brands of the Edwardian era. Manufactured by Lever Brothers at Port Sunlight on the Wirral, Hassall designed a number of posters and advertising inserts, some of which were reproduced as postcards. These designs date from 1900 to 1910.

Top left: *Nugget Boot Polishes*, show card, *c.* 1905.

Top right: Pearline, The Paint That Never Grows Old, *c.* 1905. Hassall clearly drew on his illustrations for the Peter Pan-els (see p. 259) for this advertisement.

Bottom row: Hassall often placed nursery rhyme characters outside children's books. In this case, Little Bo-Peep promotes Lanura wool flannel, and the Old Woman Who Lives in a Shoe shines up her home with Day & Martin's Blacking (1900s).

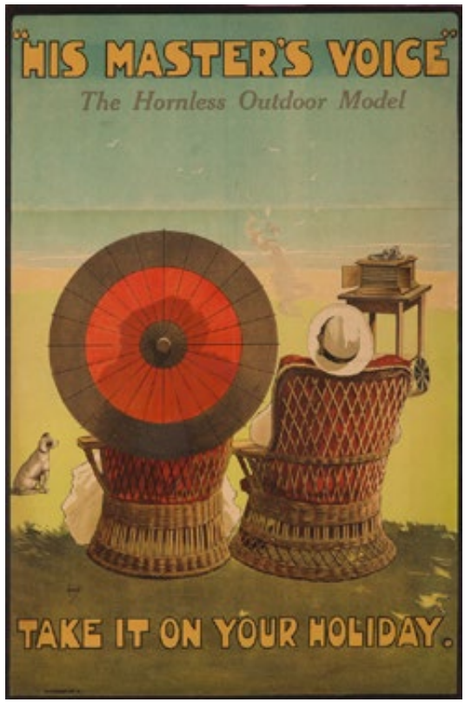




Top row: The pervasive influence of brands and advertising is reflected in this 1920s photograph showing two women in fancy dress. The girl on the right is dressed up as 'Twink', a popular fabric dye. Her friend has chosen to go as Hassall's 'Vim' character (left) complete with vertiginous hat and flamboyant bow tie.

Bottom left: Puryta Parchment Writing Paper advertisement, *c.* 1900. The inexperienced and gauche housemaid was another servant who made regular appearances, not only in Hassall-designed advertisements, but in comic magazine illustrations too.

Bottom right: Morse's Hard Drying Fresco Distemper. Coloured bill head with illustration by Hassall. The receipt is dated May 1927.



Top left: "His Master's Voice" Take It On Your Holiday. Hassall's designs for the gramophone company here and opposite both feature 'Nipper' the famous HMV dog. In the poster opposite, Nipper's attitude, with ears half-pricked, is mimicked by the household's servants to delightful effect.

Bottom left: Harbutt's Plasticine advertisement, *c.* 1900. Hassall writes in his diary on more than one occasion of modelling with plasticine to pass the time while ill.

Right: Royal Bar-Lock typewriters. Fold-out promotional leaflet, *c.* 1905.

Dalso camera advertisement, *c.* 1903.

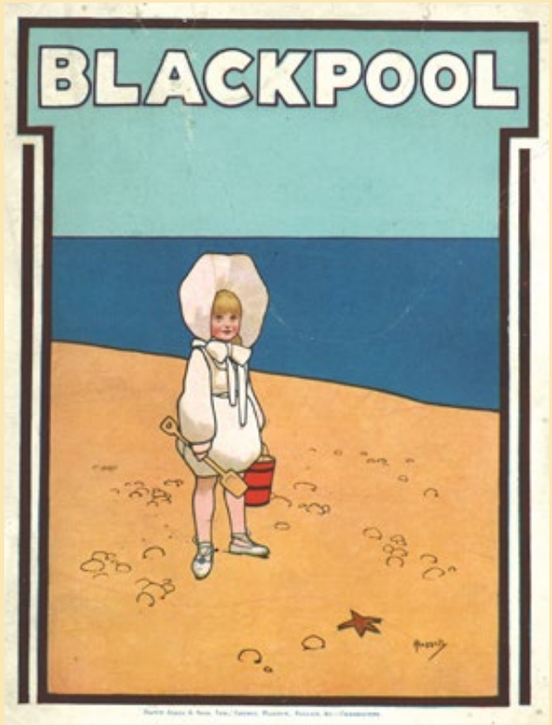
CHAPTER 5

TRAVEL AND TRANSPORT

John Hassall often attributed the success of his poster designs to the fact they conjured up a mood or a feeling, transmitted through strong yet simple images. He was not the sole exponent of this technique. Dudley Hardy, Will True and others were also experimenting with the approach, and together they injected a new vitality into theatre posters which had traditionally followed the unimaginative formula of simply showing a scene from a play. The same principle applied to travel posters, a genre in which Hassall showed some confident innovation. Most early travel posters followed the convention of showing one, or sometimes several, attractive views of the destination. Arranged together with decorative detail and copious lettering, the result was often cluttered and confusing.

Travel posters today are the most desirable of all poster subjects to collectors and yet, in comparison to the proliferation of posters flowing out of Hassall's studio for theatre and grocery clients, his designs for holiday resorts are far fewer in number. It is notable, too, that the *Poster* magazine, which covered almost every imaginable aspect of poster art, featured barely any travel posters during the early years of its publication, except for a couple which promoted the French Riviera, with pretty but fairly standard scenic views. Hassall's zenith as a poster artist pre-dated the heyday of the travel poster, the evolution of which naturally ran in tandem with the growth of overseas travel. In the latter years of the nineteenth and early years of the twentieth centuries, foreign holidays remained the preserve of the wealthy. More common at this time were posters for steamship services, about which Edgar Wenlock, writing in the *Poster* in May 1899, was fairly scathing:

> These posters make no appeal – not the very faintest – to the imagination. There is sea – always calm for obvious reasons – an expanse of sky, and the steamship between the two … . A series of highly coloured realistic views of the chief show places on route is certainly a very feeble expedient … . Surely something more ingenious, something more proportionate to the dignity of the subject-matter can be devised than the bills which I have just discussed. The field is a tempting one and the adventurous designer who resolves to explore it should meet with a rich reward. The pictorial advertisement of steamship services is still in its infancy.



John Hassall — Plakat für ein Seebad

Hassall's posters for Blackpool (1904) and Morecambe (1907) were an unusual combination of vibrancy and restraint, using the signature Hassall combination of bright but limited colours, and eschewing local landmarks for images that summed up the simple pleasures of the seaside.

Travel poster art would gain momentum during the Edwardian era, but its golden age was between the wars, when artists such as Roger Broders, Albert Solon and Robert Falcucci in France, and Tom Purvis, Frank Newbould and Frank Mason in Britain, were producing polished, glamorous posters designed to sell an aspirational dream. Many of Hassall's posters were for seaside resorts during the first decade of the twentieth century, hoping to cash in on the boom in day-trippers and weekend visitors, usually factory workers who were enticed by cheap train fares. In time, the Hassall style would be overshadowed by the new, dynamic cohort of designers, but he more than deserves recognition in this genre, if only for one, unforgettable, timeless design which was credited with the establishing the success of a Lincolnshire seaside town – his famous *Skegness is SO Bracing* poster. This, along with most other travel posters Hassall would design at this time, followed a basic but highly effective formula and helped usher in an innovative type of travel poster that

bridged the gap between Victorian fussiness and Art Deco sophistication.

Hassall used a single figure against what was usually a generic but boldly executed backdrop. He took the three key elements of a resort – sea, sand and sunshine – and distilled them down to capture the very essence of a seaside holiday. What more, asked these posters, could anyone want? Hassall's designs, when taken as a whole, with their vibrant colour schemes and pared back imagery, speak not of the raffish amusements of the seaside resort – fairground rides, Pierrot troupes and pier side-shows – but of the simple pleasures of sandcastles, paddling and fortifying fresh air. They have impact but are also reassuring. His poster for Blackpool, done in 1904, with one small, solitary girl standing on a beach, created an indelible image, more like a logo than a poster. Rather than clutter his design with well-known sights and attractions, the picture and the resort's name combined to make a design that found strength in its simplicity. Somewhat implausibly, Hassall created a visual brand which, though at odds with the resort's gay and gaudy reputation, felt instinctively right.

Another, for Walton-on-the-Naze on the Essex coast, the Hassall family's own resort of choice, again used the image of a little girl on the beach, bucket and spade at the ready, undoubtedly inspired by the holidays he enjoyed with his own children. The poster for Morecambe, with the boy peeping over a hummock of sand, is a symphony of vivid primary colours, guaranteed to stand out on railway hoardings. All of them project an air of wholesomeness, a useful quality to emphasise at a time when popular seaside resorts, overrun at weekends with day-trippers, sometimes suffered with an image problem. Hassall's poster designs presented these resorts as crowd-free and family-friendly, although, as he pointed out in the case of Skegness at the time he designed its poster, the town was relatively undeveloped. Even if he had wished to include landmarks, there were none of any note, except for the pier (which was added in a later version of the poster), and so a jolly old sea dog became its totemic symbol.

Hassall employed the one-figure formula again in 1909, when he produced one of his few posters for an overseas destination. He entered a poster competition organised by the special tourism commission of Barcelona City Council to promote the city as a winter holiday destination. The competition was opened early in 1909 with a closing date of 15 May, after which Hassall was declared one of the five winners who shared the prize money of 5,000 pesetas. His design was a masterly balance of colour and form; an elegant lady in a white dress, her parasol halo-like behind her, dominating one diagonal half of the poster from top left to bottom right, with the other side a wash of deep blue for the sky and sea, just delicately divided by Barcelona's shoreline in the distance. It was modern and refreshing, and without ponderously recording every scenic detail was felt to embody the spirit of the city. Despite five artists sharing in the prize, only Hassall's poster, along with one other by the Spanish artist, Carlos Verger Fioretti, was chosen to be printed. Six thousand copies of Hassall's *Barcelona – Ciudad de Invierno* (Barcelona – Winter City) were distributed throughout Spain and France, mainly in railway stations connecting to Barcelona.

Orient Cruises poster for pleasure cruises to Norway, late 1890s.

Hassall was, of course, well-travelled, having spent time in Germany, Canada, Belgium and France in his early twenties, and it is a pity he did not produce more posters for overseas destinations. He did, however, design several posters for the Orient shipping line, each depicting a figure in traditional dress associated with places en route, a nod to his interest in costume. Compared to the steamship posters criticised by Edgar Wenlock for their tiresome paintings of identikit ships, Hassall's posters promised a tantalising adventure in which passengers could immerse themselves in exotic cultures.

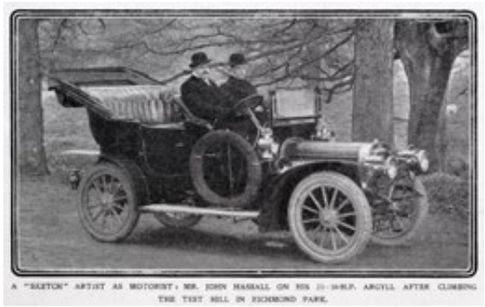
The years 1908 and 1909 were the most fruitful for Hassall's work regarding travel and transport clients. His Skegness poster had been commissioned by the Great Northern Railway in the spring of 1908 and for inspiration he rifled through his extensive back catalogue. He settled on an image of a ruddy, beaming fisherman nimbly dancing along a beach, which he had first included in the 1904 book, *Round the World ABC*, appearing under 'P' for Penzance. The new, re-worked version did much the same thing, prancing with abandon across Skegness's sands, fuelled by the bracing North Sea air. It was a prime example of Hassall's mantra of a simple idea done well, and more than a century later the poster remains better known than its creator. The design was approved and was already being reproduced as a black and white advertisement in the press by 7 May, when he entered 'Fisherman dancing' into his ledger, adding that he invoiced £10 (12 guineas) for the design and was promptly paid on the 16th of the same month. He could surely not have imagined that this one poster, out of the hundreds he had designed, would become his visual epitaph.

Also in that year, Hassall was approached by Frank Pick, Publicity Manager for London Transport, responsible for the publicity for London Underground's railway system, with a request to design the network's very first pictorial poster, *No Need to Ask a P'liceman!* Pick's vision for London Transport's branding lives on today. He believed that good design should enrich life, and his legacy has ensured the graphic art and architecture associated with the city's transport system is internationally renowned. At the time, the Underground Group (as it was then known) was in financial trouble and Pick's remit was to publicise the network as an essential means to enjoying all that

No Need to Ask a P'liceman by Hassall, commissioned by Frank Pick in 1908, was London Underground's first pictorial poster and blazed a trail for hundreds more artists whose work would continue to confirm the network's high standards of design excellence over the years.

London had to offer. Picture posters were hardly a new concept – London was filled with them – but the idea of using them to advertise something as perfunctory as public transport had not been previously considered. Instinctively, Pick knew the basis of his promotional campaign should be pictorial advertising. One of his first actions was to replace the old text posters with those designed by artists, and it is perhaps no surprise that he turned to the Poster King, then at the height of his fame, to launch this new endeavour.

Hassall regularly travelled on the London Underground and the basis for his idea may well have been picked up on one of his journeys. For his concept he opted for a humorous situation rather than graphic simplicity. *No Need to Ask a P'liceman!* pictured a befuddled couple, she stout and in the same mould as Dickens's Sarah Gamp, from *Martin Chuzzlewit*, he loaded with parcels. They are being directed to a new Tube map by a policeman, where all the mysteries of the system would be unravelled. Further brand recognition was added by Hassall, who ensured the poster also replicated the familiar-looking tiled interior of an Underground station. Two more posters followed, both starring typical Hassall characters: a mildly confused city worker consulting his pocket watch in *When in Doubt, Take the Underground*; and a lanky ticket inspector, in fits of laughter provoked by looking at the back of his ticket, where some enterprising company has taken the opportunity to place an advertisement. Hassall's posters helped to set the standard. London Transport marketing, overseen by Pick until his death in 1941, has continued up to the present day to showcase some of the brightest creative talent – both established and emerging – through its poster campaigns.


A "SKETCH" ARTIST AS MOTORIST: MR. JOHN HASSALL ON HIS 23-30-H.P. ARGYLL AFTER CLIMBING THE TEST HILL IN RICHMOND PARK.

Hassall behind the wheel of his Argyll motor car in Richmond Park, 1907.

According to references in his diaries and in interviews, Hassall regularly travelled around London by bus, Underground and taxi. However, he was also a motorist, and in 1907 was pictured in the *Tatler* at the wheel of his 23-30 HP Argyll motor car after climbing the test hill in Richmond Park. At the time, cars were still a comparative novelty (car ownership became far more widespread after the First World War) but the theme of motoring frequently crops up in Hassall's advertising work, such as in a series of amusing advertisements for the RAC, published in *Autocar* magazine during the 1920s. The car provided endless inspiration for all artists in the early twentieth century, and a number of Hassall's cartoons for the *Sketch* explore its comic potential. In *Giving His Mother a Turn on the Sea-Front* one lady is taken for a hair-raising ride in some kind of motorised bath chair. It is tempting to wonder if Hassall ever took his own mother for a spin in his Argyll with similar results.

The beginning of Hassall's career as a poster artist in the 1890s coincided with a widespread enthusiasm for cycling, a subject that produced some of the period's finest posters across Europe and America. Hassall was one of many artists who designed posters for cycle manufacturers, but one of his stand-out examples, done for Beeston Tyres of Nottingham in 1896, is typical of his off-beat approach. It shows a multitude of figures hurrying along a winding road, chasing after the tyres that, 'Go by themselves'. It is a highly populated illustration but Hassall still leaves large areas of open space, demonstrating how, even when handling many figures at once, his composition remains controlled and well-balanced.

Travel by land and sea was supplemented by the arrival of civil aviation in the 1920s and 1930s. Hassall's poster for Imperial Airways, dating from the late 1920s, depicts a rotund, elderly gentleman so soothed by his smooth flight that an attendant is reluctant to wake him on landing. It is a reassuring message, choosing to persuade travellers to take to the skies with cosy, gentle humour rather than thrusting modernism, but is no less effective for it.

As motoring increased in popularity during the first decade of the twentieth century, it provided rich material for cartoonists, including Hassall.

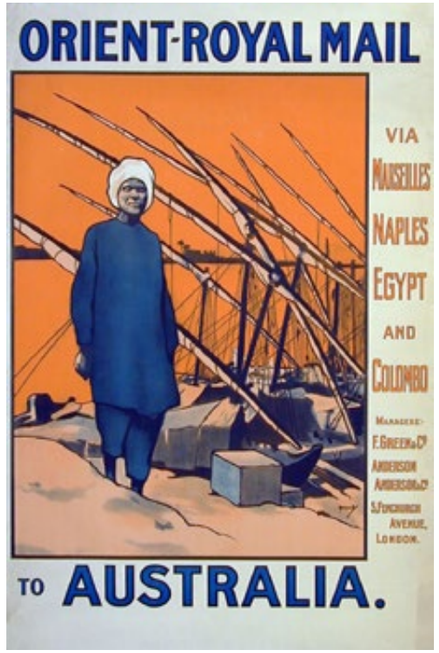
Left: Walton-on-the-Naze poster, *c.* 1924. From 1908, Walton-on-the-Naze, on the Essex coast, would become a second home for Hassall and his family. The children enjoyed the beach and in his spare time, Hassall found the area a rich hunting ground for arrowheads and flints.

Right: Milford Haven, Where Fish Comes From. Poster design for the Great Western Railway, *c.* 1925.

Left: Look on the back of the ticket, It's a Pity to Puncture the Picture, *c.* 1910. Hassall's poster for the Metropolitan Railway references the humorous adverts printed on the back of issued tickets.

Right: When in Doubt, Take the Underground, 1913. This poster is one of the few that bears the logo for the Hassall Designs Company, formed that year by Hassall, Charles Moxon Orchardson (who taught at his art school) and another painter, Leonard Carr Cox. The company was short-lived, ceasing trading on 14 September 1914, six weeks after the outbreak of war.

Barcelona, Cuidad di Ivierno (Winter City), 1909. Hassall's glorious prize-winning design for Barcelona City Council's campaign to promote it as a winter holiday destination, the poster was distributed in railway stations in Spain and France. Hassall lifts the swathes of white on the woman's dress with a little shading, and, in common with other poster artists on the Continent, there is also a subtle touch of lifelike shading to her face.



Hassall created a number of posters for the Orient Steam Navigation Company, each one depicting a figure and setting from one of its destinations. RMS *Ophir*, one of the ships offering pleasure cruises, first began operating in 1891 and became the Royal Yacht for a tour of the British Empire by the future King George V and Queen Mary in 1901, after which it was decommissioned. The poster therefore likely dates to the late 1890s.

Postcard versions of posters, 1920s, for the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique (French Line) which diversified in 1919 by offering motor tours of North Africa.

IN FOCUS

SKEGNESS IS *SO* BRACING

On 10 June 1936, the town of Skegness was 'en fête' in anticipation of the arrival of a very important visitor. The Skegness Advancement Association, the London & North East Railway Company (LNER) and holiday camp entrepreneur Billy Butlin had all joined together to invite John Hassall to Skegness. It would be the first time he had ever visited the town, twenty-eight years after creating the poster that had put Skegness on the map. The organisation of the event lay with Mr A.E. Barlow, Publicity Manager of the Advancement Association, who had arranged for fifteen members of the press to travel to Skegness and, along with local dignitaries, attend a dinner and cabaret at the County Hotel. The following morning, a special council meeting was scheduled at which Mr Hassall would be presented with an illuminated vellum as a token of appreciation for all he had done to publicise the resort.

Hassall was due to arrive by train at 3.00 pm, but there were ripples of unease when he failed to appear. One imagines Mr Barlow already composing his resignation letter in his head as the minutes ticked by, but Hassall eventually arrived an hour later, explaining that he had initially gone to Liverpool Street Station instead of King's Cross Station, and so was forced to catch a later train. The fact that some versions of his *Skegness is SO Bracing* poster actually had the departure station written across it

Illuminated vellum presented to Hassall by Skegness Council, 1936.

A MASTERPIECE WHICH STARTED A NEW VOGUE IN RAILWAY ADVERTISING.
– C. J. Salway, Passenger Manager of L.N.E.R, 1934

Skegness is SO Bracing original design, 1908.

Hassall poses with a real-life 'Jolly' outside Butlins during his visit to the town in 1936.

seemed to have passed him by.

Over the next twenty-four hours, the sixty-eight-year-old Hassall was the centre of attention. He gave a witty speech on receipt of his vellum, humbly telling the audience, 'the idea of the poster belonged to the Railway Company, and at the time there wasn't any Skegness. He merely created a Jolly Fisherman skipping along a small space of sand which might have been located anywhere around the coast, and the Advancement Association had been entirely responsible for the development of the idea that Skegness is so bracing,' adding that it was astounding to look at Skegness today and consider the developed town was younger than he was. Afterwards, he took some charcoal from his pocket and did two lightning sketches for the assembled audience, including a sequel to his original Skegness poster, in which Jolly the fisherman was seen exclaiming, 'So it is!' Then, along with other visitors, he was given a tour of the seafront and told he would be given free use of all leisure facilities, including the golf course and cinema. A luncheon for over one hundred guests was laid on at Butlin's holiday camp and Hassall was obliged to pose for a photograph with a real-life version of Jolly.

Finally, at 5.55 pm Hassall and other visitors departed on the train back to King's Cross, with dinner served courtesy of LNER. Ever well-mannered, Hassall followed up with a letter reiterating his thanks for the effort everyone in Skegness had gone to, signing off, 'Your fellow citizen – John Hassall'.

It is difficult to think of many other posters so firmly fixed in the collective consciousness as the Jolly Fisherman and the carefree slogan 'Skegness is SO Bracing'. Proof of its power lies in the numerous parodies, homages and pastiches of the poster over the years, from a 1915 cartoon by J.H. Thorpe in which Jolly is suddenly having to dodge shells during the bombardment of Scarborough and Hartlepool, to its adoption as a blueprint for anti-government satire in the age of Brexit and a worldwide pandemic.

Homage to Hassall's Skegness poster by fellow Sketch Club member, James Thorpe (1876–1949), in reference to the German bombardments of the east coast of Britain in December 1914. Published in the *Tatler*, 17 February 1915.

Top row: Left: The original version of the jolly fisherman from, *Round the World ABC* (Ernest Nister, 1902).
Middle: The Skegness Cure, 1911. Original artwork for Hassall's sequel showing the reviving effects of sea air on an invalid.
Right: Scarborough Braces You Up, The Air Does It, 1909. Other poster artists, and other resorts, tried to copy Hassall's formula, with variable results.

Middle row: Left: Photograph studio wallet, 1930s.
Middle: The Front Room is SO Bracing, *The Times*, 10 April 2020. Cartoonist Peter Brookes pays tribute to Hassall's poster in this comment on a British population in lockdown during the 2020–21 pandemic.
Right: In 1926, Hassall re-drew the poster to include the town's pier.

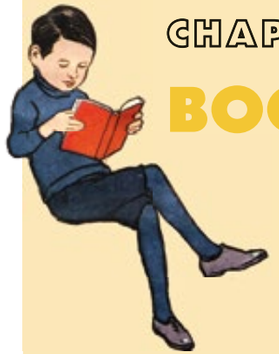
Bottom Row: Left: Postcard, 1910. The sender's note on the back suggests they are not quite as enamoured of Skegness as Jolly.
Middle: British Rail poster, 1961.
Right: A 1933 refresh by Frank Newbould (1887–1951), shows Jolly gaining a youthful companion.

Top left:
Even the Moon Beams, Ford advertisement, 1915.

Top right:
Safety-then-Comfort, Imperial Airways poster, *c.* 1930. Hassall's design seeks to soothe the fears of any potential passengers in an era of increasing civil aviation.

Bottom:
Beeston Tyres – Go By Themselves, 1896.

Four examples from a series of advertisements carried out by Hassall for the RAC and published in the *Autocar* magazine during the 1920s.



CHAPTER 6

BOOKS

Having established his reputation in the world of posters and magazine art, by 1899 John Hassall had begun to illustrate books. Even earlier than this, he started to pitch ideas for possible publications to interested parties, corresponding with the printers Carter & Pratt of Glasgow in March 1896 about a book on 'Birds and Animals of the Bible', although there is no evidence the book was ever published. In 1897, he received a letter from George Matheson of the *Glasgow Evening News* asking if he would be interested in providing illustrations for 'a bairns' picture book', for which Matheson would write the verse, but this does not seem to have materialised. Hassall appears to have built close relationships with printers and publishers in Glasgow, the nearest city to Helensburgh, the home of his first wife. In the period following Belle's death in May 1900, he continued to divide his time between his in-laws and London. There was also a vibrant publishing scene in Scotland, acknowledged by the *Graphic* in its round-up of Christmas books in 1909:

> Scotland has always been strong in child literature, her Doric being well suited for the language of the nursery, so that its rhythms have become world-famous. It is, therefore, appropriate that Scots publishers should be in the foreground among the houses that cater for Christmas books. The house of Blackie has been particularly successful.

Blackie & Son would, in fact, become one of Hassall's most regular publishing clients.

Although Hassall's early discussions about book concepts did not bear fruit, it shows that at the beginning of his career he was already capitalising on his versatility as an artist and trying to build business relationships in new areas.

The British Library lists 154 titles attributing the illustrations to Hassall, but this omits the numerous book and jacket covers he also designed, which would bring the total to at least double that number. There were a large number of popular Christmas annuals as well, to which he and other artists would contribute. His first book credits appear in 1899, but at least one cover, for Walter Copland Perry's *The Revolt of the Horses*, published by Grant Richards, appeared in 1898.

Hassall's clear pictorial style, with his vivid colour palette and solid figures, was well-suited not only to cover design but also to lithographic printing (it is interesting, for instance, that he was discussing book concepts with Carter & Pratt, which was a printer first and foremost rather than a publisher, although many printers branched out into book publishing). Consequently, Hassall stands apart from the accepted canon of golden age children's book illustrators such as Arthur Rackham or Edmund Dulac. While their delicate and intricately detailed watercolours were reproduced by the expensive three- and four-colour process on glossy book plates inserted into more luxurious gift books, many Hassall-illustrated books were priced and positioned for the middle market.

The Revolt of the Horses by Walter Copland Perry was published by Grant Richards in 1898 and featured a cover by Hassall. It is impossible to know how many book covers Hassall designed in total.

His style of book illustration was different, rather than inferior. As a rule, he was producing jolly and robust picture books, often aimed at younger children. They would become a much-loved – as well as affordable – addition to many Edwardian nurseries.

Hassall collaborated with various authors over the years, including the humourists Reginald Arkell and Walter Emanuel (who was a close friend and fellow London Sketch Club member), May Byron, the popular poet Jessie Pope, and Keble Howard, editor of the *Sketch*. However, his first collaboration was an artistic one, with his friend Cecil Aldin. Both contributed illustrations in 1899 to *A Cockney in Arcadia* by Harry A. Spurr, published by George Allen of Charing Cross Road, and in the same year the pair would illustrate *Two Well-Worn Shoe Stories* for Sands & Co. Another book from that year, intended for the adult rather than children's market – *Bachelorland: The Story of a Foundling* (p. 45) by R.S. Warren Bell – was featured in the *Poster* and praised for its graphic fluency. One more book in 1899, *An Active Army Alphabet*, also for Sands & Co., was illustrated by Hassall alone and tapped into the public enthusiasm for all things military stirred up by the outbreak of the Second Boer War.

1899 marked the point at which Hassall's work in book illustration gathered pace. That year, he collaborated with Cecil Aldin on *A Cockney in Arcadia*, which was published by George Allen.

It was also the first in a series of books illustrated by Hassall which took

Blackie & Son List of Books for Young People, 1900. Just days after the death of his first wife, Belle, Hassall was at work on a catalogue cover for the company, likely this one, as well as other commissions. Blackie & Son was one of his most regular clients and continued to provide him with work illustrating children's books into the 1920s.

Two Well-Worn Shoe Stories published by Sands & Co., in 1899, another early collaboration with his friend, Cecil Aldin.

the ABC format and applied it to different themes. Next came a direct companion book in the form of *The Naval ABC*, but Hassall would illustrate more 'ABCs', providing the pictures for comic verse written by G.E. Farrow in *An ABC of Everyday People* and *Round the World ABC*. *The Pantomime ABC*, published in 1902, with verse by Roland Carse, is perhaps his most successful. Taking the reader through the various pantomime characters, both onstage and behind the scenes, the book shows Hassall at his dynamic and inventive best, using isolated figures and negative space with great visual eloquence. On one page, the spotlight operator is just a face, his jet of light scoring an otherwise pitch black expanse, and on another, a devil character springs into the air amid a firework-like explosion of light. There are principal boys, juvenile cast members, captivating fairy queens and even the theatre manager awash with paperwork in his office, each page a surprising contrast to the last. The *Sketch* recognised the book's sophisticated take on the subject in its issue of 1 January 1902:

> 'The Pantomime ABC' is very well illustrated by Mr. John Hassall, who has become *par excellence* the children's artist. His quaint pictures seem to appeal particularly to the freakish fancy of a child. In this instance, however, the book is really, I should say, intended for grown-ups, as neither the verses nor the pictures treat the pantomime from the child's point of view … . One of the most weird illustrations is of the limelight man, whose
> … luminous ray
> Is varied according to plot;
> It's white for the ones who are good in the play
> And is coloured for those who are not.

Six and Twenty Boys and Girls was published in 1902 by Blackie & Son, with verse by Clifton Bingham again using the alphabet as a device for a lively gallop past a cast of characterful children from the neatly dressed smugness of Perfect Paul to Lazy Lawrence, dragging his feet to school.

Other titles from the 1900s move away from the comic, and are instead charming evocations of Edwardian childhood, such as *Barbara's Song Book* by Cécile Hartog, published by George Allen in 1900. As with some of his illustrations for periodicals, the characters Hassall pictured in books often seem deeply rooted in his experience of parenthood. He was an astute observer of children – of their quirks, their moods and their physical traits. Books such as *Our Diary of Teddy and Me* (Thomas Nelson, 1920) or *The Chums* (Thomas Nelson, 1906) show children in a range of wholesome activities, which are reflected in many photographs of his family life. Children building sandcastles or playing in rock pools bear more than a passing resemblance to Dorothy, Ian and Isabel on the beach at Walton-on-the-Naze, for instance, while his delightful illustrations for Aileen Orr's *Miss Manners* (Andrew Melrose, 1909) shows a nursery interior, complete with the sort of pictures on walls that he himself designed for children. Another illustration, depicting a boy and a girl stretched out on the floor, drawing, must surely have been a familiar scenario in the Hassall household.

By far the bulk of Hassall's book illustration deals with traditional fairy tales and nursery rhymes, which he would draw again and again for a seemingly insatiable market and most frequently for Blackie & Son. Some of his illustrations are found repeated in repackaged formats over the years, as variations or anthologies of rhymes and stories from Mother Goose or Charles Perrault. The books were given interchangeable titles: *The Favourite Nursery Rhymes* (Blackie & Son, 1911), *Blackie's Popular Nursery Stories* (1940) or *Blackie's Green Picture-Book of Nursery Rhymes* (1923). For these books, Hassall often turned to his favourite old-world style of character, dressed in exaggerated costumes of breeches, pointed shoes, doublets and high hats, or corseted dresses and hooded capes. The clothes seemed equally comic on the old and young, the stout and skinny, and were an unmistakeable Hassall peculiarity.

There is an appealing warmth in this aspect of Hassall's children's book illustration, but he was also able to skip seamlessly to other genres. The famous tales of adventure in other lands and other centuries told by G.A. Henty called for simple but dramatic covers, which Hassall provided, creating a consistently uniform style across the series for books with rousing titles such as *In the Hands of the Malays*, *By Conduct and Courage* and *Boys of the Light Brigade*. Or, for one-off publications such as the *Coronation Picture Book* (Lawrence and Bullen), published to coincide with the 1902 Coronation of King Edward VII, and *Good Queen Bess* (David Nutt, 1900), his illustrations are more detailed, teeming with life and colour.

Poster for *The Girl and the Gods* by Charlotte Mansfield (Hermes Press, 1906).

Hassall was paid well for the books he illustrated. Sometimes he received a flat fee, as in 1906 when Thomas Nelson agreed to pay him £125 (roughly the equivalent of £12,000 today) for providing twenty-four pictures for an animal book, while for *Miss Manners* he received the same amount for a similar number of images from Andrew Melrose. On other occasions he would receive a smaller, up-front amount on completion of the book, followed by a royalty on net sales, such as when Aldin and he signed a contract to provide Lawrence and Bullen with thirteen books (although it is unclear whether this contract was every completely fulfilled).

Publishers were trusting of Hassall, often giving him a fairly basic brief to work to,

although he would usually be sent the text written by the author and sometimes he would make suggestions about how to improve the story to make the illustrations and text complement each other seamlessly. Ronald Spicer of Andrew Melrose wrote to Hassall about *Miss Manners*:

> I am writing Miss Orr about your suggestion … and I have no doubt she will carry out your ideas in this, for after all, the book depends almost entirely upon your work.

In most cases, it was Hassall's illustrations that carried the book, with the text being of secondary importance. Even in the case of books such as J.J. Bell's *Wee Macgreegor* (first published by the Scots Pictorial Publishing Company in 1903 but later published by Grant Richards, and then Hodder & Stoughton), a tale of a working-class Glaswegian boy and his family, it was Hassall's visualisation of the character which was to seal his popularity and turn the character into a brand.

Hassall was always keen to innovate and experiment with different formats. He contributed a title, *Ten Little Jappy Chaps* to a series published by A. Treherne & Co., called 'The Stump Books', which were unusually long and slim in format, measuring 1½ inches in height and 6 inches in length. In 1904 he also drew a delightful series of 'London Characters' for a tiny 'matchbox' book, *The Safest Series for Children*. Its size was part of its novelty, of course, as were the verses by Jessie Pope, but the characters inside – including a crossing sweeper, a cab runner, a tea shop girl and a hawker – are a fascinating glimpse into now obsolete jobs, trades and professions which were very much part of daily life during that period.

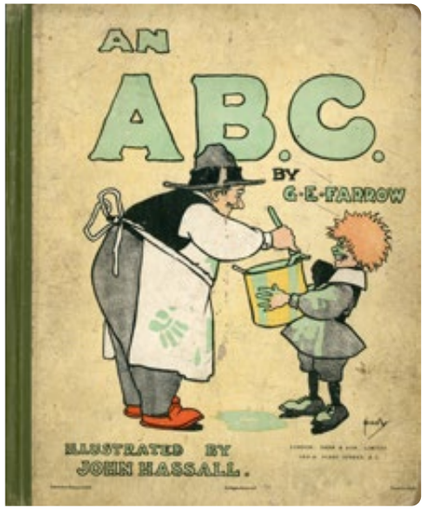
Book jackets are notoriously prone to damage and disappearance, which may be one reason why Hassall's work beyond the children's book market is less well-known. However, he provided some striking covers for comic novels by Stephen Leacock, published by Bodley Head in the 1920s, a writer whose name has been obscured over the last century but who in his day was one of the most famous English-speaking humourists in the world. He also, coincidentally, bore a striking resemblance to Hassall, was just a year younger and had grown up in Canada. There were also illustrations to

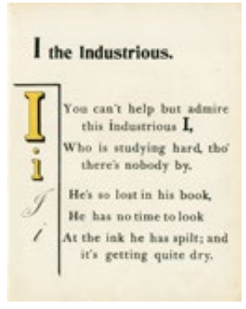
Matchbox-sized book, *The Safest Series for Children – London Characters*, 1904.

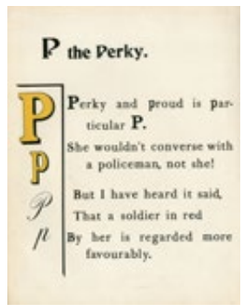
one of the many memoirs and books of anecdotes written by his friend George Robey, such as *My Rest Cure*, published by Grant Richards in 1924, and he provided the drawings for several sequels to *Wee Macgreegor* and other humorous books by J.J. Bell, as well as books by Keble Howard and Walter Emanuel published by Sisley's Library of Humour. More seriously, Hassall provided illustrations to *A Day in Tangier*, a book by Arthur Lasenby Liberty of Liberty and Co. *Love in a Cottage*, another book by Keble Howard and published by Grant Richards, was fully illustrated by Hassall and publicised via posters that replicated his cover. The story was a light-hearted tale of newlyweds who decide to spend their honeymoon in a remote country cottage. Published in September 1903, at the same time that Hassall married Maud and the couple spent their honeymoon in a cottage in the New Forest, the book's timing was particularly appropriate.

As in all areas in which Hassall worked, his book illustration showed how well he could adapt to subject-matter. By the early 1920s he was illustrating a long-running series of fairy tales and classic stories for Blackie & Son, including standards such as *Little Red Riding Hood*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Jack and Jill* and *Beauty and the Beast*. His covers, done in watercolour, are a departure from his familiar flat colour style and, as a result, not as effective. In fact, his rough pencil sketches, still extant in his archives, even in their raw state offer the more familiar liveliness and spontaneity we associate with his work, as do the line drawings inside the books. However, Hassall continued to illustrate books into the 1930s. One of his latest was *Albert, 'Arold and Others* for the music publishers Francis, Day and Hunter in 1937, in which Hassall drew forty-six delightful vignettes, showing both contemporary and historical characters, to accompany popular songs written by Marriott Edgar and performed by the composer and Stanley Holloway. The cover, showing Mr and Mrs Ramsbottom of Blackpool, is typical of Hassall's warm, cheery style and, as one of his final books, is a fitting sign-off from a book illustrator who gave so much pleasure to readers over almost forty years.

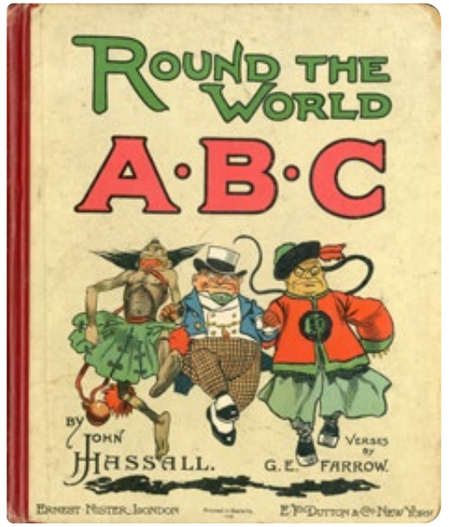
Albert, 'Arold and Others published by Francis, Day and Hunter in 1937, with illustrations by Hassall drawn to accompany popular songs. This, together with a sister titles, *Albert and Balbus and Samuel Small* and *Normans and Saxons and Such*, was one of Hassall's final book illustration commissions.

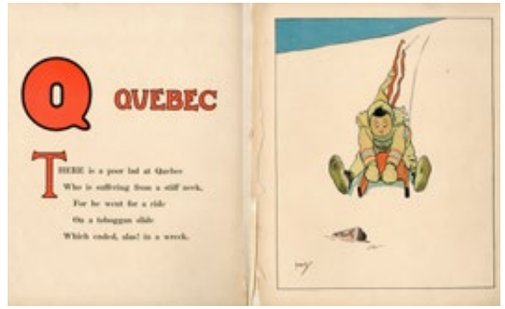






Hassall's *An ABC of Everyday People, Good, Bad and Indifferent* (Dean & Co., 1902), was accompanied by verses from G.E. Farrow and featured illustrations of people as manifestations of various character traits.

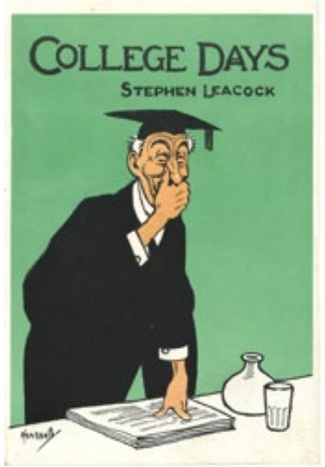


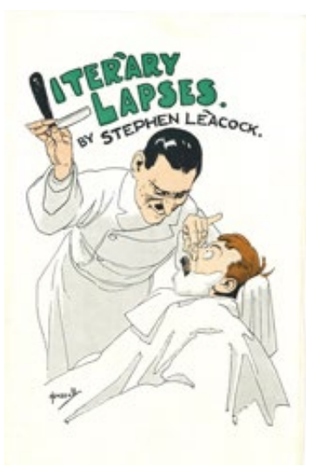


For the *Round the World ABC* (Ernest Nister, 1902), Hassall again teamed up with G.E. Farrow. Among the pictures showing comic characters from various countries, was a jolly, sauntering fisherman representing P for Penzance (p. 197), the blueprint for the star of Hassall's Skegness poster a few years later.

Poster, and preparatory drawing, for *Love and a Cottage* by Keble Howard (Grant Richards, 1903), which replicated the cover design. The light-hearted novel received enthusiastic reviews. 'Mr Keble Howard is funny and an observer,' wrote the *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News*, 'and Mr. Hassall is an exceedingly clever artist. Their joint work is very entertaining.' Keble Howard (1875–1928), the pen name of John Keble Bell, was editor of the *Sketch* and he and Hassall would have known each other well.

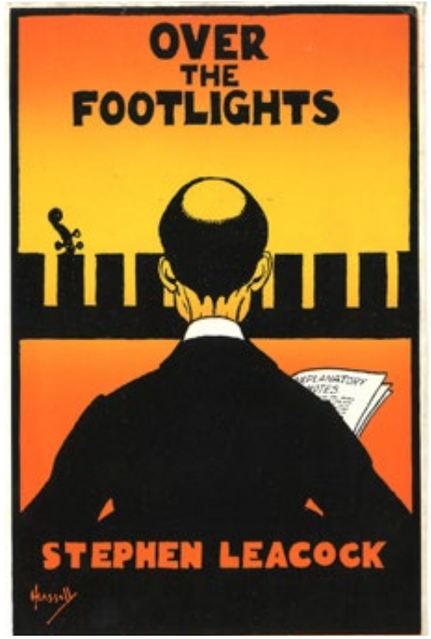
Illustrations from *Miss Manners* by Aileen Orr (Andrew Melrose, 1909), described as 'a very pretty book for children', by the *Sphere* in its 'Literary Letter' column.





Front cover designs by Hassall for a variety of titles by the humorist Stephen Leacock, published by The Bodley Head during the 1920s. As the bottom left design shows, Leacock bore more than a passing resemblance to Hassall.

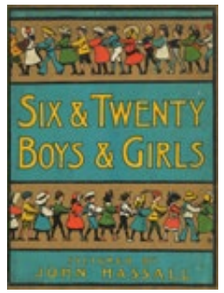
Opposite:
Hassall's natural knack for humour made him the ideal choice for designing books in that genre, including, *My Rest Cure*, one of a number of books by stage superstar and 'Prime Minister of Mirth' George Robey (Grant Richards, 1919), *Our John M.P.* by Keble Howard (Sisley's, 1906) and a book of reminiscences, *The Old Pink 'Un Days* by J.B. Booth (Grant Richards, 1924).

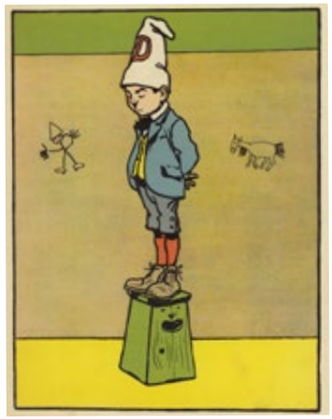


Top: An Active Army Alphabet (Sands & Co., 1900) reflected public preoccupation with the war in South Africa during this period. The illustrations inevitably have a strong British bias, such as this one showing the comical-looking Boers hurrying away as the dashing Hussars appear in silhouette on the horizon.

Left: A Naval Alphabet (Sands & Co., 1901). Hassall's pictures in the various 'ABC' books he worked on during the 1900s, combine isolated figures and large areas of negative space, a combination that made a bold graphic statement.

Barbara's Song Book by Cecile Hartog (George Allen, 1900). The charming illustrations demonstrate a flowing line and softer colour palette in accordance with the Arts and Crafts style of the period.





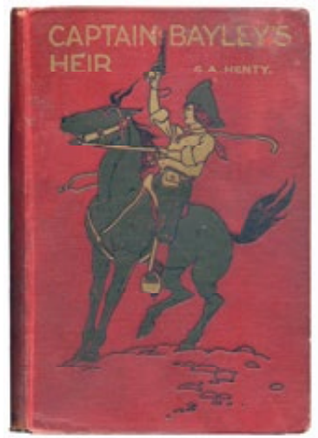
Six & Twenty Boys and Girls (Blackie & Son, 1902), featured pictures of children, both naughty and nice, and verses by Clifton Bingham.

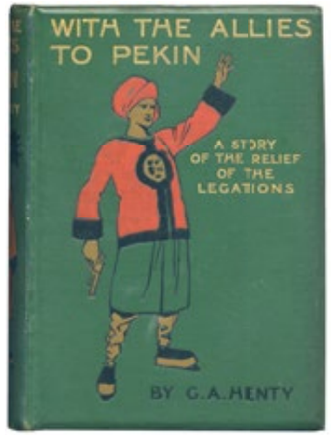
THE THOUGHT READER

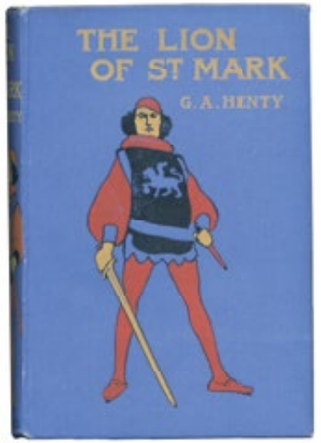
THE CONJUROR

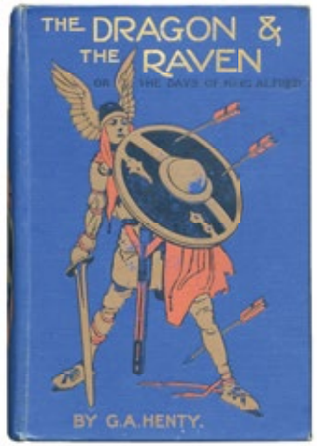
TABLE GOLF

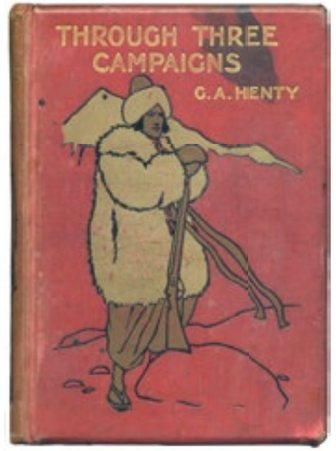
Hassall also illustrated non-fiction books, including this cover for *Home Fun* by Cecil Bullivant (Thomas Nelson, 1910). He also designed the cover for another title by the same author, *Every Boy's Book of Hobbies* (T.C. & E.C. Jack, 1911). The colour illustrations are part of a set of proofs in the Hassall archives, and are from an unidentified book (possibly *Things to Do*).

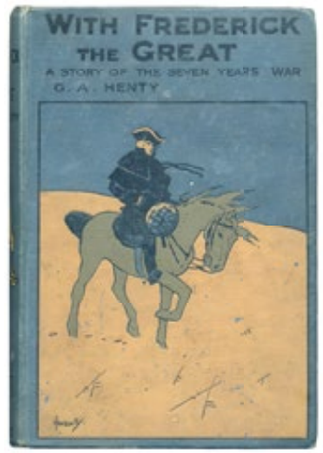












Covers to a selection of stories by G.A. Henty designed by Hassall and published by Blackie & Son. George Alfred Henty (1832–1902), began his writing career in 1855 as a war correspondent for the *Standard* newspaper, covering conflicts including the Franco-Prussian War and the Ashanti Campaign. He published his first book for boys in 1868, eventually writing over 80 different stories which drew on the themes of adventure and stirring deeds in an age of Imperialism. Henty's works, with their racial stereotypes and unbridled nationalism, were hugely popular for the time and set a precedent for other adventure story writers such as Herbert Strang and Frederick Brereton. 'My object,' he once said, 'has been to teach history, and, still more, to encourage manly and straight living and feeling among boys.'

IN FOCUS

WEE MACGREEGOR

In 1901, the writer J.J. Bell (John Joy Bell, 1871–1934) began to contribute a series of short stories to the *Glasgow Evening News* about a little boy called 'Wee Macgreegor'. Written in Glaswegian vernacular, the tales of Wee Macgreegor and his 'Maw' and 'Paw', a decent working-class family, immediately struck a chord with the Scottish public and the eponymous character's slogan, 'Whit wey Paw?' was soon on everyone's lips. Bell's inspiration for the character stemmed from a memory he had of a trip on board the Firth of Clyde steamer bound for the Isle of Arran on Glasgow's annual holiday, 'Fair Saturday'. Bell recalled, in an interview in the *Strand* magazine (undated), that he heard a harassed mother of five shout at her son: 'Macgreegor, ye wee rascal, tak' yer paw's haun'!' Bell remembered, 'I did not see the child addressed; did not want to see him; but the sound of the name, so unusual as a "front name", even in Scotland, induced more smiles than mine.' When Bell approached several publishers with the suggestion that Wee Macgreegor should be launched in book form, he was able to find a publisher only by putting up the required cash himself. It was worth a gamble. Within a week of publication the first 3,000 copies sold out. Five weeks later, sales had risen to 20,000. 'Wee Macgreegor' turned out to be a gold mine. The book, initially published by the Scots Pictorial Publishing Company of Glasgow, was already into its fourteenth edition by the time the *Dundee Evening Post* sang its praises in February 1903:

> 'Wee Macgreegor' is not a myth. He is a living reality, to be seen any day of the seven playing around a shop window or dodging the electric 'caur'. The dialect of the Glasgow folks is faithfully presented, and so are many of their foibles.

Wee Macgreegor lampooned in *Punch* by Charles Harrison, 16 December 1903.

Right: Cover for the thirty-ninth edition of Wee Macgreegor, proclaiming 170,000 copies sold. The book, which was taken up by Grant Richards in London, was a publishing sensation.

Left: Not wishing to mess with a successful formula, Hassall's cover for J.J. Bell's sequel simply depicts Wee Macgreegor in a slightly different position.

Right: In 1915, Macgreegor, no longer quite so wee, joined up and Hassall redrew him in the uniform of the 9th Highlanders, his Balmoral bonnet replaced by a Glengarry cap. This edition was published by Hodder & Stoughton.

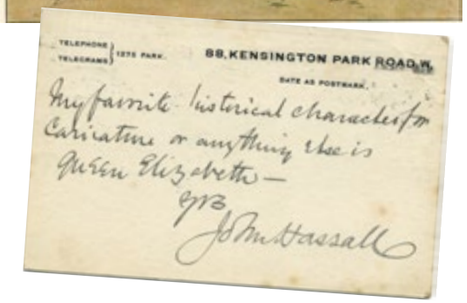
Hassall's illustration for the front cover of *Wee Macgreegor* – a small figure swaddled in a red muffler (a typical Hassall detail) and a Balmoral bonnet – brought the character to life and would contribute to the popularity of this new literary phenomenon. 'Thanks in large measure to a clever frontispiece by John Hassall,' wrote the *Scotsman* in Bell's obituary in 1934, 'the book proved an extraordinary success.' As well as featuring in several sequels written by Bell, Wee Macgreegor was also reproduced on postcards, match holders and on a range of china manufactured by Glasgow Pottery. Wee Macgreegor 'taiblet' (tablet, a sugary Scottish fudge), rock and lozenges flooded the market, as did replica hats and mufflers, dolls, pencils and even Wee Macgreegor-endorsed sardines. The use of Wee Macgreegor's image by aerated water manufacturer William Coutts of Aberdeen, when it was already in use for lemonade made by Robert Barr of Falkirk, resulted in a 1903 court case over copyright infringement.

Firmly established as an icon of popular culture, a Glasgow pantomime had one ballet scene featuring a troupe of Wee Macgreegors dressed exactly as Hassall's picture, and the character travelled south too, appearing in cartoons in London papers and as a character in the Camden Theatre's production of *Robinson Crusoe* in 1904. A three-act comedy of Wee Macgreegor was staged at Scottish theatres and in 1922 Welsh-Pearson brought out a moving picture, *Wee Macgreegor's Sweetheart*, starring Betty Balfour. A Wee Macgreegor Fund was established by the *Glasgow Evening Times* in 1905 to mark the success of the book, with donations given to the Glasgow Western Infirmary. In the 1940s, long after Bell's death, the Scottish Home Service broadcast *Wee Macgreegor* on the radio in weekly episodes, adapted by R.J.B. Sellar and produced by Howard M. Lockhart.

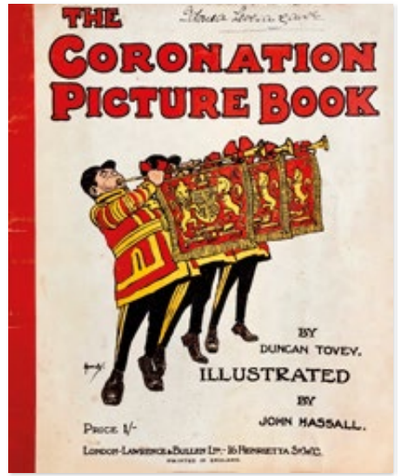
When Hassall was asked by *Modern Business* magazine to list which illustrations and designs he considered his most successful, he chose Wee Macgreegor alongside his famous posters for Skegness, Blackpool, Veritas Mantles and the British Vacuum Cleaner Company.

Advertisement for Wee Macgreegor china and stoneware, manufactured by Glasgow Pottery, from the *Ironmonger Diary*, 1904.

'J.J.B' would write many more books, for which Hassall would illustrate some of the covers, but none would ever have the success of *Wee Macgreegor*.



Good Queen Bess (David Nutt, 1907), a child's history of the life of Queen Elizabeth I. In 1918, Hassall wrote to a fan in response to the question, who was his favourite character from history to draw. His answer, on the postcard, was unsurprising.



A Coronation ABC published by Lawrence and Bullen in 1902 to mark the coronation of King Edward VII featured every facet of the coronation from the crowds to the congregation – except, tantalisingly, the actual king. Hassall even drew himself as the artist, albeit with a beard, perched on top of a chimney to get a view of the procession.

By the time *The Pantomime ABC* was published in 1902 by Sands & Co., Hassall was being hailed by the *Sketch* as, 'the children's artist par excellence'. The book is a masterclass in form and colour.

A is the "Author" at work, as you see,
On a popular Nursery Rhyme;
When written (with scissors and paste)
it will be
"An Original Grand Pantomime."

C is the "Clown," who exclaims: "Here
we are,"
His annual funny remark:
His tricks used to entertain Great
Grandmamma,
And his jokes all come out of the ark.

H is the "Harlequin," spangled and spry,
Who gyrates and capers about,
He prances and poses, tho' no one
knows why,
And I think he himself is in doubt.

J is the "Johnnie" who sits in the stalls,
Electing the actors to spurn,
But during the pantomime usu'lly falls
In the snares of each actress in turn.

L is the "Lime-light," its luminous ray
Is varied according to plot:
It's white for the ones who are good in
the play,
And is coloured for those who are not.

D is the "Demon" who's shot up a trap,
To a chorus of mystified "ohs!"
You know at a glance he's a terrible
chap,
By the bit of tinfoil on his nose.

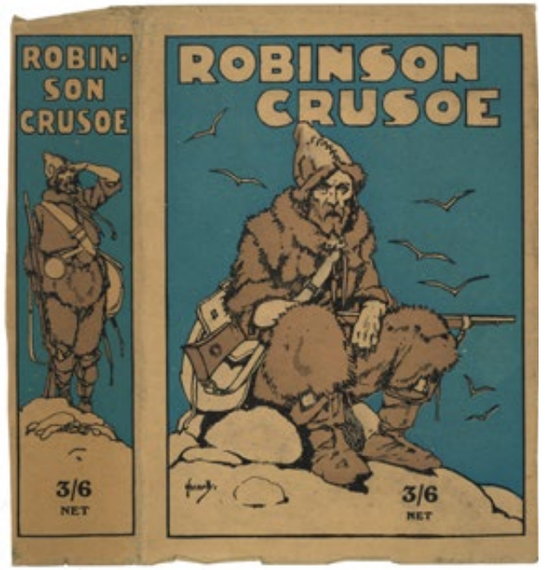
E is the "Elements" which, at his will,
This fellow suppresses or stirs,
Wind, thunder and lightning, rain, hail
and snow, still,
It's apparently "draughts" he prefers.

F is the "Fairy Queen" whom, you will find,
A wand will invari'bly bring,
She's always so pleasant, so good and
so kind,
Till the moment she essays to sing.

U is the "Urchin," who's willing to be
A "chimpanzee" or "a Sioux,"
A "will-o'-the-wisp," or "a wave of
the sea,"
Or whatever you like from the "Zoo."

X is the "'Xtra Girl," stately and tall,
Exceedingly comely to view:
'Specially engaged "to do nothing" at all,
And she does it most capably too.

Y is the "Youngsters," such dear little things,
The sweet fairy fays of the glen:
But when they're denuded of muslin
and wings,
Don't appear quite so fairylike then.



Clockwise from top right: *Robinson Crusoe*, undated jacket design in the Hassall archives. He would provide illustrations for a number of editions of the classic story.

Original pen, ink and gouache illustrations of *Little Red Riding Hood* and *Little Blue Boy* in the Hassall archives.

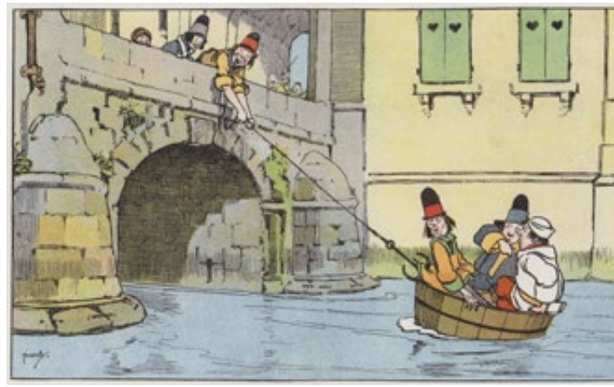
Illustration from *Jack the Giant-Killer* reproduced in several different editions of fairy tales published by Blackie & Son.

Rough pencil drawing for an edition of *Mother Goose*. The finished edition was published by Blackie & Son in 1909.

'Listen!' Illustration from *John Gilpin and Other Stories* (Blackie & Son, *c.* 1930).

Left: Preparatory sketch for the cover of a Blackie & Son book. Pencil, enhanced with pen & ink.

Right: 'Rub-a-dub-dub, Three Men in a Tub' from *Blackie's Popular Nursery Rhymes* (Blackie & Son, 1913).

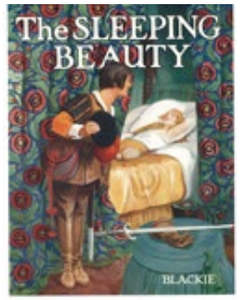


Left: 'The North Wind Doth Blow', page from *All the Best Nursery Stories and Rhymes* (Blackie & Son, 1905).

Right: Illustration from 'Beauty and the Beast', from *All the Best Nursery Stories and Rhymes* (Blackie & Son, 1905).

Left: Cinderella illustration from *Blackie's Puzzle Pictures: Cinderella and other Nursery Tales* (*c.* 1908)

Middle and right: Two examples of the later fairy tale books published around 1920 onwards by Blackie & Son and featuring a more painterly style of cover by Hassall.



Illustrations from *The Princess and the Dragon* (Duckworth & Co., 1909).

Ruff and Reddy, The Fairy Guide (Alf. Cooke, 1905) was written by May Byron and G.E. Farrow. The book carried a dedication to Dorothy, Hassall's eldest daughter, who also starred as the main character.

In 1904, Hassall teamed up again with his friend Walter Emanuel for *The Zoo, A Scamper* (Alston Rivers). Unusually, the illustrations were line drawings, heightened with white against a brown background, reminiscent of the rough preliminary sketches Hassall usually did on thin brown paper. The muted colour palette is particularly successful and the book a fine example of Hassall's superb draughtsmanship.

CHAPTER 7

FINE ART

Hassall's enormous success as a poster artist was at the expense of realising his ambitions to become an acclaimed painter. 'I went to Antwerp without a thought about painting posters and drawing for the papers … . I went with the idea of producing great pictures which would make the world wonder,' he declared in an interview with the *Young Woman* magazine in 1901. To a journalist from the *Captain*, he explained, 'I was going to be a great artist, of course. The kind of artist who paints enormous pictures, and gets infinitesimal prices for them, or fails to sell them at all.'

Fresh out of art school, the acceptance of two oil paintings at the Royal Academy in the summer of 1894 must have given Hassall cause to hope his dream was on course to be fulfilled, but exhibiting at Burlington House – and the associated prestige – did not pay the bills. Commercial art did, and Hassall found out very quickly that he had a natural talent for it. However, once crowned 'The Poster King', it turned out to be a title he could not easily shake off.

Despite this, throughout his life Hassall continued to paint, mainly in watercolours and sometimes in oils. At any given time, his studio would have a picture he was working on in between the more urgent commercial jobs. This was often to please himself, but he also carried out numerous commissions ranging from portraits to historical scenes. He regularly exhibited his work, notably at the RI and other London galleries, but also more widely around the UK and occasionally abroad. His paintings were also judged to be of sufficient interest to be reproduced in the press with some frequency.

Painting allowed Hassall to break with the limitations imposed on him by poster work and to indulge in themes and styles that interested him. He filled his pictures with detail and chose a softer, more graduated colour palette. In 1910, the *Tatler* devoted a page-and-a-half to 'John Hassall's Serious Art', in which the interviewer considered how popular recognition was rarely the driving force behind artists such as Hassall:

All The King's Horses and All The King's Men painted in 1901 and exhibited at the RI that year.

> So when one speaks to Mr. Hassall of the several millions of people who know and revel in the Hassall posters … one is not greatly surprised to find that his attention wanders. It is the 'serious' picture on his easel, a picture which a few hundred visitors to a gallery will see, that is interesting him – for painting serious pictures is his real life's work. It is also his chief if not sole amusement. 'To see the thing grow,' he says, 'is so exciting.'

A series of large-scale watercolours in the early 1900s drew on historical themes, both factual and imaginary. They are a distinct departure from his more familiar images, but still retain certain Hassall traits, particularly in the figures' costumes, which are often a hybrid amalgamation of styles, cherry-picking from the medieval, Elizabethan or Puritan periods. Many of the characters from his book illustrations were dressed in a similar fashion. The techniques of poster art are hinted at in some pictures, with figures given a slight but noticeable outline. Faces, too, exhibit typical Hassall characteristics, rounded and wide-eyed in the case of children, craggy and stern in older figures, while the backgrounds to his images are often suggestive of a medieval fairy tale, a quirk he attributed to his time spent in Antwerp where, 'It must have been my studies of those old Flemish Masters which have led me to saturate myself so much in medieval times.'

In *All the King's Horses and All the King's Men*, exhibited at the RI in 1901 and taking its title from the nursery rhyme 'Humpty Dumpty', Hassall created a scene of dazzling pageantry, with a throng of knights and soldiers – flanked by

Hassall at work on *The Morning of Agincourt* in 1903, taken from his 'Sketch Photographic Interview' from April that year.In its 25 March issue, the *Sketch* reviewed the RI show and described the picture (right) as 'original and noteworthy'.

townsfolk out in force to greet them – marching through city gates. The painting was mentioned, along with his *Hark! Hark! The Dogs do Bark*, in the *Tatler* from 1902:

> Both of the five-foot canvases glow with a soft opulence of colouring, but the Humpty-Dumpty picture with its fantastic panoply and its stir and life seems the happier as the realisation of fairy-tale land.

Another painting, the *Pied Piper of Hamelin*, exhibited in 1904, continued the fairy-tale theme, though *The Raiders* (date unknown but possibly 1900) and, in particular, *The Morning of Agincourt* (1903) were an attempt to reconstruct a historical event in a more realistic manner. For *The Morning of Agincourt*, it was reported widely that Hassall travelled to the site of the battle and consulted contemporary accounts in order to paint the most authentic scene. Afterwards, he confessed that the assembled warriors should have been more stripped for battle. Perhaps a sense of propriety prevented him from showing too much masculine nakedness?

Much in-depth research was carried out for another historical painting, this time a commissioned work of Queen Elizabeth I's state visit to Bristol on 14 August 1574, intended to fill the first of several panels in the city's newly built Council Chamber and paid for by Walter Melville Wills, a well-known benefactor of Bristol. Opinion was divided over the selection of Hassall for such an important commission, with some local journalists questioning the choice of a poster artist. A letter to the *Bristol Times*, from 18 December 1916, leapt to his defence, arguing that Hassall's serious work more than proved he was up to the job:

Right: Detail from *The Raiders*, a watercolour 1.5 metres wide (date unknown but possibly 1900). The painting was among those shown by Hassall at Gieves Art Gallery in 1925; *The Times* singled it out as an example of 'How he might paint serious pictures, but still preserve his qualities.'

The Morning of Bannockburn, Hassall's large oil painting, measuring 125cm x 180cm, was commissioned by Glasgow Corporation in 1914 and recorded the great Scottish victory against the English on 24 June 1324. Now part of the Kelvingrove Gallery's collection, Hassall was working on it when war broke out.

> The last quality I have mentioned – the sense of 'realness' – is exemplified in his 'Agincourt'. The English yeomen on the morning of the battle are drawn up in silent array, and the chief thing one feels is that here is no band of stage supers and artists' models, but the real, hard, unshaven, sweaty warriors, whose descendants one has seen and known, in the plough-stilts and in the field.

The *Western Daily Press* perhaps over-egged Hassall's qualifications, declaring him, 'one of the recognised authorities on medieval history'. It also mentioned a recent collaboration with a Dr Murray of the British Museum on a work of Elizabethan history, as well as his painting *The Morning of Bannockburn*, commissioned by the Corporation of Glasgow just two years earlier.

The picture was the result of copious correspondence between Hassall and a Bristol-based publisher of prints and postcards, Ernest Wyman Savory, who was also Chairman of the Royal West of England Academy Council and had been designated project manager. Savory furnished Hassall with accurate details of the Elizabeth I's visit, including the exact buildings standing on that specific part of Broad Street at the time. He also enlisted the help of the medieval historian Alexander Hamilton Thompson, who helpfully got his young daughter to draw sketches of the arms of the City of Bristol so that Hassall could replicate it on the processional banners. Savory seems to have been unable to stop himself micro-managing the painting, sending Hassall (whose attitude to commissions was usually fairly relaxed) several letters in which instructions are frantically capitalised and underlined in red:

Queen Elizabeth I's State Entry into Bristol. Commissioned by Bristol City Council for its new Council Chamber, Hassall was micro-managed throughout the weeks he spent on the oil painting by the art publisher, Ernest Savory. In a letter to an unknown recipient dated 4 May 1917, he declined an invitation due to other commitments and wrote, 'I am doing a 9 foot canvas for Bristol Council Chamber – Queen Elizabeth's entry in August 1574 and it's full of historical detail. I shall be dim [sic] glad when it's finished and gone.'

> I'm very anxious about the portrayal of the Queen – a strong, masculine face will be the making of the whole picture … and remember the sunlight on the green of the boys' costumes.

Another letter pleaded with Hassall to have the picture ready for 4 July, as that was when the Lord Mayor intended to invite guests to the grand unveiling. The finished painting, which *was* ready in time, was a lively vision of pomp and pageantry, full of bustle and movement, with carefully placed patches of sunlight suggesting the narrow Tudor streets. The eye is drawn to Elizabeth I herself, bathed in another pool of light, riding above her entourage on a white horse. The picture has the storybook quality of many of Hassall paintings, which, for its purpose, seemed appropriate. Hassall attended the unveiling and suggested in his speech that other counties and towns should commission paintings of their history, so that local people would be saved the trouble of learning it in books.

A few years earlier, in 1913, Hassall was engaged to work on another complicated commission, a series of group portraits depicting notable men and women of the time to be published as limited edition prints by Claude Leachman and J. Rivers Fry of the Magna Charta Publishing Company. These included *Notable Singers of the British Empire*, *The Ring of Tattersall's*, *Jockeys and Trainers* and *Stars of Musical Comedy*. Hassall was to receive a third of the net amount received from the sale of copies, and a further third from any sale of one of the original works. In return, he would work on individual portraits either from photographs provided or by sittings at his studio, most of which were arranged by Leachman and Fry. With each image

comprising of twenty or thirty portraits, the logistics of arranging sittings was challenging, made worse when certain sitters requested changes to their portrait. One letter, written by Fry to Hassall, instructs him that the opera singer and actress Ruth Vincent would arrive at his studio at 2.00 pm the following day, while Miss Edith Evans was going to call at 11.00 am but was now expected not to, so Mr Heasman would call at that time instead. Madame Louise Dale was scheduled to come for a sitting on the Saturday, as was Mr Joseph Bayliss for the Tattersall painting. Mr Edward Hopkins, another Tattersall figure, would come the following Tuesday. Fry's postscript is amusing: 'I say, be careful of Ruth Vincent – she thinks she ought to be very prominent.' Another note, from December, states: '(Jeffrey) wants his cheeks made a little fuller and a little more colour.' In February 1914, Leachman wrote to say, 'Mr. Ruston and his good lady turned up this morning, and his wife is anxious for him to have rather big eyes and also lighter in colour, and his hair not so grey, and the mouth a little relaxed.' One cannot help wondering if Hassall's usual good humour began to falter as the requests for changes and enhancements piled up.

The arrangement went sour in 1914, when a third-party licensing deal was

Hassall once told a journalist, 'One day I am going to paint a huge battle picture, the best thing that I have ever done. It's going to be the crowning point of my career.' He would never quite achieve that ambition – at least not in terms of critical acclaim – but was commissioned to paint several battle scenes by Colonel Grant Morden, MP during the 1920s, shown here reproduced as Christmas cards from the owners.

struck with the Fine Arts Publishing Company to market *The Lobby*, a work of over ninety members of parliament in the lobby of the House of Commons, painted to commemorate the retirement of Arthur Balfour. Mr Brittain of the Fine Arts Publishing Company sold the painting, together with the photogravure plate, without paying Hassall the 20 per cent that had been part of the original agreement, forcing Hassall and Fry to launch legal proceedings against him. The whereabouts of the original painting is unknown.

Commissions such as those undertaken for the Magna Charta Publishing Company no doubt eroded some of the pleasure of painting for Hassall. He was happiest when tinkering away on a picture of his own choosing, and while historical pictures were one favourite area, there is a wide-ranging eclecticism to the contrasting subjects he chose: *Ali Baba*, *The Frog Prince* and *Cinderella* trod familiar territory, and *The Jury*, from *Pilgrim's Progress* reflected Hassall's admiration of Rembrandt in its lighting, with its coarse-featured and lugubrious characters emerging out of the gloom. Then in 1906 came his subdued yet powerful *Unemployed*, a contemporary work of social awareness showing a procession of unemployed men and boys trudging through the evening drizzle. When it was exhibited at the Spring Exhibition at Southport Gallery in 1907, the *Manchester Courier*'s review was impressed with the 'large watercolour in which a slouching crowd of men is seen through a dim light, and where an amount of power scarcely expected in water-colour is exhibited'. Others were less enamoured with Hassall's sometimes laborious use of the medium to suggest light and shade. *The Times*'s art critic, after seeing Hassall's one-man exhibition at the Gieves Gallery in Old Bond Street in October 1925 wrote:

> As a poster artist, and long before excellence in the form was common, Mr. Hassall earned our gratitude, if not as a decorative designer at any rate by his humorous invention. Take away his humour and he is hardly more than industrious, labouring water-colour to death in the interests of sentimentality. How he might paint serious pictures and still preserve his qualities however, is shown by 'Raiders'. Most of the other pictures are drowned in light and shade.

Did Hassall see this review? He kept press cuttings religiously, but this one is notable by its absence in his archives. Perhaps his

Right:
A Hassall cartoon in the *Sketch*, 5 April 1905, reflecting his own frustrations at being pigeon-holed as a humorous artist.

Opposite:
'It must have been my studies of these old Flemish masters which have led me to saturate myself so much in medieval times.'
In *The Jury* from *Pilgrim's Progress* (1907)(top) and *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor , Rich Man, Poor Man, Apothecary, Thief* (1911)(bottom) Hassall indulged his love of the Middle Ages and displays the influence of his artistic hero, Rembrandt.

exhibition the following year, at Parsons Showrooms on Oxford Street, aimed to refresh his paintings when he took the unusual step of curating the pictures in room sets to demonstrate how they might fit into a decorative scheme at home.

Hassall also kept handwritten notes on each picture, recording when and where it was exhibited, and if sold, to whom.

It was the era of the international exhibition, and Hassall's paintings – large, impressive canvases, packed with details and featuring a subject or narrative that was familiar to many – were a crowd-pleasing choice for events that welcomed tens of thousands of people through the gates. Consequently, a number of his pictures were exhibited internationally during the 1900s. *Hark! Hark! The Dogs do Bark* was first shown at the RI in 1902, but went on to travel extensively: to St Louis for its International Exhibition in 1906 and to Christchurch, New Zealand in 1907. It appeared at the Franco-British Exhibition in London the following year, and in 1910 Hassall was asked if he would send it, along with his *Cinderella* and *The Conqueror*, as a contribution to the British Fine Arts Palace at the 1911 International Fine Arts Exhibition in Rome. The letter from the committee responsible for selecting the British pictures must have been gratifying for Hassall to read:

> It is the wish of the British Committee that our section also should be the best ever sent from this country, and we therefore desire to enlist the patriotic co-operation of the most eminent British Artists. Although the number of works must necessarily be restricted, it is desired that that the merit of each individual work will result in the formation of an Art display of great excellence.

The painting was eventually sold in 1920 to Mr Allan Dawson of Alder House, Pudsey, Yorkshire. *All the King's Horses and All the King's Men* was shown in Johannesburg in 1903, while *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Sailor, Rich Man, Poor Man, Apothecary, Thief*, painted in 1911, travelled to Toronto the same year. Others were sold to major galleries. *The Deputation* went to Liverpool's Walker Art Gallery and *The Pot Seller*, first exhibited at a London Sketch Club exhibition in 1907, was sold to a gallery in Christchurch, New Zealand. Many were sold privately, such as *Laugh and the World Laughs with You*, a.k.a. *Punch and Judy*, which was purchased by Lord Dewar of the whiskey dynasty in 1921. Some of these have resurfaced at auctions over the years but the whereabouts of a number of original Hassall paintings is unknown.

In 1911, Hassall had staged a one-man exhibition in the Palm Court at Selfridges, the innovative department store which had opened two years earlier. The majority of his large watercolours from the previous decade were displayed there, a number of which continued to form the core of a collection that was shown at the exhibitions at the Gieves Gallery and Parsons Showrooms, and would also tour provincial galleries around the UK into the 1920s. Hassall exhibitions took place in many towns and cities, including Cheltenham, York, Southport, Hull, Derby and Burton upon Trent.

Clearly, his desire to be recognised as a painter did not wane, and perhaps figured more in Hassall's mind as he got older and his commercial work began to reduce. However, being hailed as the Poster King had its disadvantages. The *Studio* magazine, writing in December 1905, had recognised this:

Hark, Hark, the Dogs do Bark, another RI exhibition painting, done in 1902. According to his records, it was Hassall's most widely exhibited painting, travelling all over the world, including Liverpool in 1902, the St Louis International Exhibition in 1906, Christchurch, New Zealand in 1907, the Franco-British Exhibition, 1908 and the Rome International Exhibition in 1911.

> He himself is half afraid that the reputation he has made with posters will, like the very hoardings he has embellished, rise up between a more delicate manifestation of his art and the eyes of his public.

The introduction to one exhibition booklet from the 1920s argued that versatility in art was a virtue rather than a weakness, citing the original Renaissance men Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci as prime examples of artists who could excel in more than one area:

> In this Exhibition, Mr. John Hassall, R.I. makes an effective bid for consideration of his strong claim for recognition as a painter of pictures. The chief obstacle to such recognition is his assured fame as our leading poster artist and one of our most delightful book illustrators. We are only with difficulty persuaded that any person known to do one thing well is capable of equal excellence in other things.

Hassall was not alone among successful commercial artists in hoping that posterity would view him as a painter of stature. Fellow London Sketch Club member William Heath Robinson, for example, originally had ambitions to be a landscape painter until financial necessity caused him to turn to book and magazine illustration. However, Hassall remained more active than many of his Sketch Club contemporaries, painting pictures and exhibiting them for as long as there was interest. By the time of his

Hassall painted *Unemployed* in 1906, and after being exhibited at the RI, it was exhibited in Birmingham, Hull, Wolverhampton and at the Coronation Exhibition at Shepherd's Bush in 1911. The picture was also reproduced in the high-quality publication *Bibby's Annual* in 1912, founded and edited by Joseph Bibby. Bibby had made his fortune in grain imports and animal feed, and although originally a Methodist, became a member of the Theosophical Society. He was also a progressive employer and wrote widely on social issues.

death, his paintings, like his posters, had become outmoded, if indeed they ever were in vogue. His obituary in *The Times* dismissed his watercolour painting (again) as 'laborious gradations of tone, possibly a relic of his training under Bouguereau'. The commentator failed to view Hassall's paintings in the context of their time, when they received a positive reception from at least the majority of art critics and were well-suited, in terms of subject and tone, for inclusion in some of the period's most important popular cultural events. Any admirer of Hassall is faced with a dilemma when considering his fine art. Many pictures have their shortcomings, trapped somewhere between fantasy and reality, both in terms of theme and execution, and there are certainly some oddities among his choice of subject. Most could never have been considered fashionable or ground-breaking at any time in the past century, but they show an impressive level of skill in his handling of densely populated compositions and, despite occasional heavy-handedness, an assured confidence in using watercolour on a large scale.

Hassall's fame as a poster artist easily overrode his reputation as a painter and it is probably true that without that reputation his paintings might not always have had the public platform they did. However, those large paintings completed during the 1900s, with their medieval multitudes and old-world buzz, are without doubt fascinating to look at. It is easy to imagine the Edwardian public doing the same and thoroughly enjoying, without cynicism or judgement, this comparatively forgotten aspect of Hassall's art.

CHAPTER 8

THE NURSERY, POTTERY AND POSTCARDS

In the summer of 1909, a photograph showing the two eldest children of the King and Queen of Spain appeared in numerous papers around Europe. The Prince of the Asturias, and his brother Don Jaime, were pictured in their 'English nursery' in the Royal Palace in Madrid. The children's mother, Queen Victoria Eugénie (known as Ena), was English. As the daughter of Princess Beatrice and a favourite granddaughter of Queen Victoria, the public was intrigued to see her sons – the little heir to the Spanish throne and his brother – in such an anglicised setting. Among the plump, chintzy furniture and swagged curtains are two framed pictures visible on the wall. They are by John Hassall and are two-thirds of a triptych entitled, *Morning*, *Noon* and *Night* which he designed specifically as nursery decor. The *Tatler*, in featuring the photograph, wrongly attributed the pictures on the wall to Cecil Aldin, although an apology appeared in the following week's issue.

Morning, *Noon* and *Night* were among a variety of charming nursery friezes, panels and pictures Hassall designed for the firm Lawrence and Bullen of Henrietta Street, Covent Garden from 1900 onwards and was a venture shared with his friend Aldin (explaining the mix-up by the *Tatler*). Aldin's style worked in harmony with his own, the pair spent much time together and had small children of a similar age. It is delightful to see in a photograph of Hassall's two eldest children, Dorothy and Ian, that one of Aldin's friezes of dogs is pasted along the nursery wall behind them. Hassall and Aldin contributed a roughly equal number of designs on themes, which included farmyard animals, hunting and a 'Normandy market' from Aldin, while Hassall chose Noah's Ark, 'Our Village', toys and children in quaint costumes. In addition, Hassall designed four framed panel pictures of *Flower Dances*, based on traditional nursery rhymes; large, square panels of nursery rhyme characters, and a design of four angelic heads illustrating the familiar children's bedtime prayer, 'Matthew, Mark, Luke and John/ Bless the bed that

Dorothy and Ian Hassall in their nursery, *c.* 1901, with a Cecil Aldin frieze on the wall.

I lie on …'. The designs were marketed as suitable for every room in the house, but especially halls, libraries, smoking and billiard rooms, and children's nurseries (which is where most of them ended up). Printed by lithography, the printed friezes were of high quality and claimed to be more brilliant than the ordinary wallpaper process. In 1900, Aldin and Hassall displayed their pictures, friezes and panels in two room sets, a day nursery and a night nursery, at the Woman's Exhibition at Earl's Court. In its report on the show, the *House* magazine was particularly enchanted by the room sets, advising readers that they alone provided ample reason to visit the show. The *Art Journal* took an even greater interest, giving over eight pages to 'Art in the Nursery' and identifying the same qualities in Hassall as a nursery artist that others had attributed to his success as a poster designer:

> Mr. Hassall may well be described as an artist of many moods, and it is little short of impossible to 'sum him up'. His technique is remarkable but, beyond and above that, his work is always so 'thoughtful', if I may so express it, that a cursory examination is useless for its true value to be estimated … . His power lies not so much in his mastery over form and colour, which all must admit to be exceptional, as in the idea which underlies it all, and which he knows so well how to convey.

It went on to suggest that exposure to such delightful imagery could be a formative influence in children:

> By placing young children amid such surroundings, a taste for beautiful things must be fostered and a solid foundation laid for subsequent art education.

The designs were not only used in the Spanish royal nursery but were also reported to have been chosen by the Queen of Holland for her children. Moreover, by the 1920s, when Princess Mary, the daughter of the King George V, had married and as Viscountess Lascelles had two sons, she too chose a Hassall frieze for their nurseries at Goldsborough Hall in Yorkshire and at Egerton House in Suffolk, featuring panels of small boys playing a number of different sports. Her endorsement of Hassall's designs was picked up by the *Humanist* magazine, which ran an advertisement for Hassall's latest, *Sunlight*, frieze, the same eight panels portraying children at play that Princess Mary had selected, announcing that for every frieze sold, a donation would be made to the British Humane Association for its work in the 'Sunlight Clinic for those children suffering from physical defects due to modern town civilisation'.

A fold-out sheet showing some of the designs available for the tasteful nursery. Cecil Aldin's *Farm Yard* and *Duck* friezes are seen centre. Hassall is responsible for the remainder of designs.

Newspaper cutting showing an example of the nursery frieze designed by Hassall for the sons of Princess Mary, Countess of Harewood.

Where royalty led, society followed. It became fashionable to decorate a nursery with Hassall and Aldin's designs, which were retailed by that mecca of artistic taste, Liberty & Co. Some of the Hassall and Aldin nursery designs would later be published by Sanderson, and it says something for their timeless appeal that they continued to be a popular choice for nursery decoration for two decades. They certainly showcase Hassall's style to great advantage, with each frieze printed in a bold primary colour palette against a more muted background colour and the solidly drawn, isolated little figures spaced rhythmically at intervals. Being ephemeral items, original examples are very rare. In 2014, the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired Art Fund support to purchase the original artwork for Hassall's toys frieze, which now forms part of its collection at the Museum of Childhood in Bethnal Green, London.

Hassall's design for Liberty also extended beyond his nursery pictures. Around 1910, two of his designs for Arts and Crafts chairs in stained oak, similar in style to the furniture his comical Elizabethan characters might have sat on, were made available at the store, together with an oak pipe rack featuring, for the amusement of the Edwardian pipe smoker, a lithographic panel decoration from the nursery rhyme 'Old King Cole', the eponymous subject of which, of course, called for his pipe, his bowl and his fiddlers three.

Many twentieth-century illustrators, including Cecil Aldin, Heath Robinson, Mabel Lucie Attwell and Hilda Cowham had their pictures used for ranges of ceramics. Hassall was no exception. He designed nursery tiles manufactured by J.H. Barratt & Co. of Stoke-on-Trent, and a set of china produced by Atlas China, which again featured typically amusing Hassall nursery rhyme figures. Royal Doulton took his illustrations for his 1904 book, *The Twins*, and adapted them for a series of stoneware jugs, vases, jardinieres and flasks.

More unusual was a set of small, ceramic figures with egg-shaped, poseable heads, designed in collaboration with Hugh Walford and manufactured in 1913 by Max Emanuel & Co., which was located at 41 and 42 Shoe Lane, in Holborn, London but had a factory in Mitterteich in Bavaria, Germany, an area renowned for its china manufacture. The set consisted of several figurines – a boy scout, a Scotsman, a Grenadier, a sailor, a clown and 'Robert' and 'Martha', a policeman and a cook respectively. The local bobby and the cook were a favourite pairing among illustrators at the time and they frequently appear in flirtatious scenarios in cartoons, often with the bobby taking a break from his beat to be indulged by the cook with a pie just out of the oven, or perhaps a stolen kiss. Hassall extended the range with designs for a series of sporting characters, including a cricketer, a footballer, a billiards player and a golfer, all with more rounded heads echoing whichever ball they used in their chosen sport. The little figures were launched without a name. Hassall and Walford had christened them the 'Miggles' as a working title, but it did not seem quite jovial enough. The *Pall Mall Gazette*, in a review of the figures and an interview with Hassall, came up with the rather unoriginal suggestion of 'the Hassall toys', which, considering the familiarity of their creator's name, was perhaps not without merit. The *Daily News and Leader* gave a whole page to Hassall and his latest project, but before going into detail gave an evocative description of his studio for its readers as:

> a large and original room, with every inch of wall occupied by a wonderful collection of things – posters, pictures, antlers, curtains, trophies from the Wild West where Mr. Hassall roughed it in his early youth as a farmer, drawings by his children, dead birds that had dropped down the chimney or been discovered on the roof, these and a hundred and one others formed a curiously characteristic collection.

The article continued:

> 'I always work without a coat,' he explained apologetically, as, like a whirlwind (he is tall and athletic with lightning-like movements) he whisked me across his studio to look at the very latest 'Hassall figures' as they are called. 'These are what have been interesting me most lately,' he said. 'This little policeman is very popular with motorists. They stick it on their motors – no, not for luck, but just for the fun of the thing. His helmet is moveable. See how his whole expression changes when I move his helmet,' and Mr. Hassall jammed the helmet down desperately over the eyes, then placed it rakishly far back on the head.

Hassall claimed that his idea for the figures evolved from an Easter egg which he had started but did not finish in time. Distributed globally through an agent, Mr Pappenheimer, who worked for Max Emanuel, the figures were enormously popular. A car mascot version of 'Bobby' was produced, and there were enquiries from William Seelig & Co., who were interested in developing a range of children's toys based on the characters, although it is unclear whether this ever came to fruition. In 1938, one of the figures, the golf caddy, was brought back to life by the firm of Dunlop, which used him on a range of branded gifts, including an ashtray. Hassall told the papers how the figures, and particularly Bobby, had become a mascot during the First World War: 'They were carried on many a motor lorry on the Western Front and were said to bring their owner good luck.' In 1917, the ocean liner RMS *Medina* (launched 1911), was torpedoed off the coast of Devon by a German U-boat. More than a century on, the wreck remains relatively intact on the sea bed. Among the items salvaged from the ship were three of Hassall's sporting figures – the cricketer, the golfer and the golf caddy – proof of Hassall's claims.

Another natural outlet for Hassall's illustrations was the postcard. Picture

Hassall developed his original wobbling head figurines into ornaments with a practical use, such as this footballer match holder.

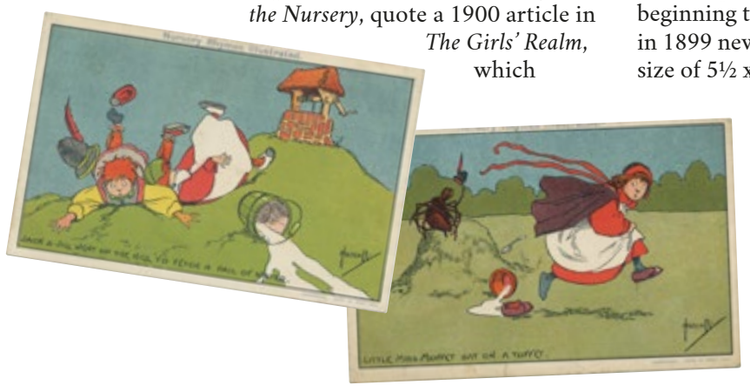
Two of Hassall's square-format lithographic prints of nursery rhyme characters, designed to be framed for children's bedrooms and nurseries. Others in the set included Little Tom Tucker, Little Bo Peep and Simple Simon.

postcards had first emerged in Germany around 1898, and soon afterwards famous poster artists such as Alphonse Mucha and Raphael Kirchner published their work in this format, kick-starting a craze that would dominate the next two decades. Postcards were a form of communication well-suited to the brisk and modern Edwardian era. They were quick to write, and with the postal service offering as many as six deliveries a day, a rapid form of communication. Peter and Dawn Cope, in their book, *Postcards from the Nursery*, quote a 1900 article in *The Girls' Realm*, which stated, 'The picture postcard is a sign of the times. It belongs to a period peopled by a hurried generation which has not many minutes for writing to friends.' Aside from their practical benefits, they were also an affordable but covetable item, and so the collecting of postcards and the assembling of them in albums and scrapbooks became an absorbing hobby for many.

At first, British artists and publishers, who were restricted to postcard reproductions of just 4½ x 3½ in, could not compete with the European designs beginning to flood into the country, but in 1899 new legislation allowed a larger size of 5½ x 3½ in, and in 1902 an Act of Parliament permitted postcards with messages written on the back to be sent through the post (something that was previously forbidden). If some of the greatest Continental poster artists were reproducing their work in the new postcard format, then it was unsurprising that Hassall, the leading British posterist, would do the same. Postcards were cheap and so the fees paid to artists for postcard designs were correspondingly low. However, for a rapid worker such as Hassall, who could turn out several simple illustrations in an afternoon, it was easy money. In 1899, the same year the larger size postcard came into existence, Hassall had a set of old-world characters published by Raphael Tuck & Sons, his first series of postcard designs and one of the earliest published in Britain. A series of boys' sports under the title *Fun and Frolics* were depicted in twelve designs published by C.W. Faulkner & Co. in 1901, after which came comic designs for the Davidson Brothers and more for J. Baird and Co. of Glasgow. In addition to purpose-designed postcards, many of Hassall's posters were shrunk down to the postcard format by David Allen & Sons, and he also created bespoke designs for commercial brands such as Nestlé. Hassall's cheery, simple characters, already proven to stand out so prominently on the hoardings, lent themselves well to being reproduced in miniature form. There were a number of sets for Wrench and for Davidson Brothers that drew on some of his favourite nursery rhymes for inspiration.

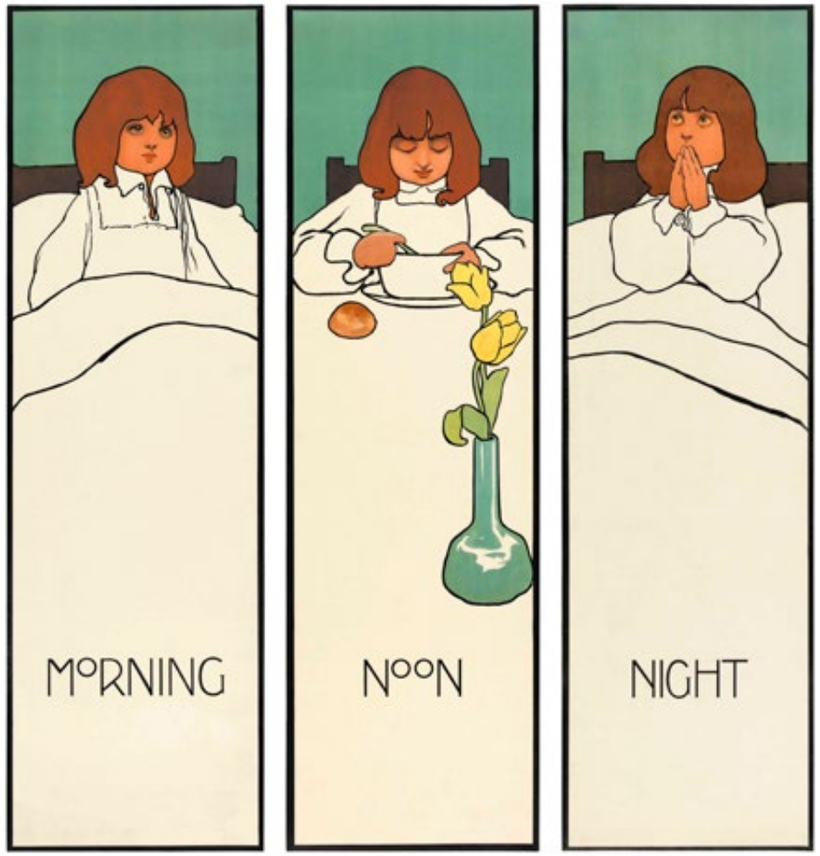
Hassall was a multi-tasker and a serial creator. Even when not working on specific official commissions, he would make toys for his children or would model items out of plasticine. A little book, made for his nieces and nephews, is preserved in his archives, as well as sketches of flints and arrowheads found and recorded, lists of costume ideas for fancy dress balls, illustrated letters to his children and scores of menu cards, invitations and pamphlets drawn by him for his numerous clubs and societies. Other items, such as playing cards, bridge scorers, labels and packaging for Christmas crackers or Easter eggs, surface occasionally on auction sites, though many, through their ephemeral nature, are extremely rare. However, taken as a whole alongside his famous posters, charming book illustrations, ambitious paintings and comic magazine illustrations, John Hassall's creative output was simply astonishing. We may never know its full extent, but this book is an attempt to represent at least a fraction in a condensed tribute to a lifetime of art, creativity and, as Hassall himself would have put it, 'a good idea, decoratively carried out'.

Perrier bridge scorer pad, cover and detachable order form inside. Hassall provided a small illustration for each page, *c.* 1920s.

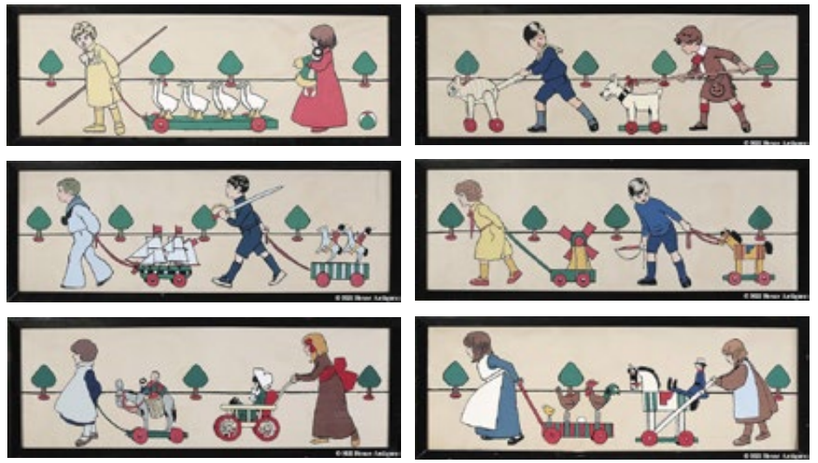


Two postcards from the *Nursery Rhymes Illustrated* series, published by Davidson Brothers, *c.* 1909.

Left:
This original pen, ink and wash illustration was one of four charming designs Hassall created of festive Tudor children, (publisher and date unknown). The image was also divided and individual figures were reproduced on cards.



Morning, *Noon* and *Night*, lithographic prints published by Lawrence and Bullen, 1900 onwards. They were a popular choice for nurseries, especially after the Queen of Spain chose them to adorn the walls of her own children's nursery. The photograph (right), showing the Prince of the Asturias and his brother Don Jaime in the nursery, with the pictures visible, was distributed to magazines and newspapers throughout Europe.



Top: original artwork of medieval nursery rhyme figures for one of the friezes Hassall designed for Lawrence and Bullen in 1900. The photograph shows Maud Hassall in bed, recovering from influenza around 1905, in the company of Dorothy and Isabel. Behind the bedstead can be seen the same pictures pinned to the wall.

Middle: six of seven panels comprising *The Toy Frieze* for Lawrence and Bullen. Hassall's firmly outlined figures and solid colours lent themselves well to this kind of application.

Bottom: The Mulberry Bush, lithographic print, Lawrence and Bullen, 1900 onwards.

PETER PAN

Peter Pan programme cover by Hassall

When the new play by J.M. Barrie, *Peter Pan, or The Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up*, opened at the Duke of York's Theatre on 27 December 1904, it was a sensation. 'Never has Mr. Barrie's charming fancy and imagination been seen to greater advantage,' wrote the *Sketch* magazine in its 31 December issue. It also loaded praise upon the cast, which included Gerald du Maurier who played George Darling/Captain Hook, and Nina Boucicault, whose performance as Peter was declared, 'a thing of genius'. Thereafter the play was performed annually during the Christmas season and soon received an almost cult following. In 1907, when Pauline Chase was playing the lead role, the *Sphere* noted, 'The vogue of *Peter Pan* is really extraordinary. The first night it was received with almost hysterical enthusiasm by a house which knew every line of script and every turn of stage management.'

Another reviewer in the same publication noted, 'I know of no type of entertainment with the exception of the Savoy operas that has created such a cult as *Peter Pan*.'

Hassall himself played a part in creating the cult of *Peter Pan*. He had been called upon to design one of the posters for the first production and chose to depict a scene on board the pirate ship, which itself was a parody of W.Q. Orchardson's painting, *Napoleon on Board the Bellerophon*. Then in 1907, Lawrence and Jellicoe (formerly Lawrence & Bullen) published six panels designed by Hassall, ideal for the nursery, showing scenes from the play and priced at 2 *s* each. The panels were advertised in the play's programme, which also bore a cover by Hassall.

The key to *Peter Pan*'s success had been its ability to captivate young and old alike, and Hassall's 'Peter Pan-els' had the same effect. In May 1916, he received a letter from Harry Savory, son of the fine art printer and postcard

Hassall's poster for the first 1904/05 season of *Peter Pan* at the Duke of York's Theatre. Unusually for him, it directly represents one of the scenes from the play (above).

Peter Pan lithograph panels by Hassall, measuring 71 x 88 cm, published by Lawrence & Jellicoe, 1907. Note that in the children's bedroom Hassall has painted on to the walls Aldin's and his nursery friezes and pictures, including, *Morning, Noon* and *Night* – a canny piece of cross-promotion. The panels were displayed and sold in the foyer of the theatre for any members of the audience wishing to make a spontaneous purchase after being captivated by the play.

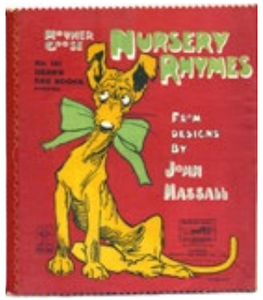
Peter Pan lithograph panels by Hassall, measuring 28 x 74 in, published by Lawrence & Jellicoe, 1907.

publisher Ernest Savory. Harry was at a training camp on Salisbury Plain preparing to go to the Front.

My dear Mr. Hassall,

I managed to get hold of the Peter Panals [sic] thanks to you and I'm sure they gave much joy to the kiddies I sent them to. I liked them so much that I had another set sent down which now adorn my little room in our hut, they make it very bright and Mother and Father who paid me a visit last weekend were awfully taken with them and really my room beats anyone else's for comfort.

Peter Pan Painting Book, published by Lawrence & Jellicoe, 1915.



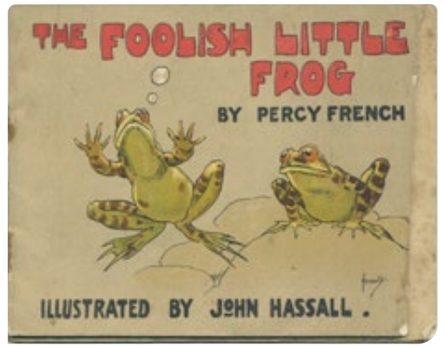
China beaker and tea plate, part of a range manufactured by Atlas China of Stoke-on-Trent, 1906–1910. The illustrations had already featured in several editions of nursery rhyme books, including this Dean's Rag Book.

Royal Doulton produced a range of Lambeth Ware jugs, flasks and vases featuring Hassall's characters from the 1904 children's book, *The Twins*, published by Thomas Nelson & Sons.

Top: Pipe rack featuring *Old King Cole* lithograph for Liberty & Co., *c.* 1910.

Middle: Stained oak chairs, designed by Hassall for Liberty & Co., *c.* 1910.

Bottom: Figures designed by Hassall and manufactured by Max Emanuel & Co., in 1913. He was inspired to create the range after decorating Easter eggs.



Top: Sometimes, Hassall took on commissions that brought together the editorial and commercial worlds, such as *The Foolish Little Frog*, a small paperback book for Colman's of Norwich (undated), with subliminal advertising on each page.

Middle: The Nestlé's Painting Book (undated) contained nursery rhyme designs in postcard form, one printed in colour and another to be coloured in, with perforations allowing for the cards to be torn out and posted.

Ye Olden Centurie was one of the first picture postcard sets published in Britain by Raphael Tuck, in 1899. They featured Hassall's illustrations of eighteenth-century characters, complete with tricorn hats and churchwarden pipes.

Hassall tended to return to his beloved historical characters (*below*) for Christmas cards, although the three designs (*right*) showing ladies in the snow, coloured in muted, wintery tones, are rather elegant. Publisher unknown, *c.* 1900.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Writing a book requiring historical research during a global pandemic is not to be recommended. The past year has been challenging in terms of gaining access to archives and images, and at times the whole project felt impossible. But somehow, with the help, support and encouragement of the following people this book became a tangible thing.

First and foremost, members of the Hassall family, Mark, Tom and Nicholas Hassall, gave their full backing to the project from the outset, both in terms of loaning items from their collection and sharing information. Thank you, this book literally could not have happened without you. I'd also like to thank other family members, David Dobereiner, Mary Meredith, Bill Meredith and Jo Benson.

Nigel Cochrane (now retired) and Lucy McCaul, custodians of the Hassall archives in the Special Collections at the Albert Sloman Library, University of Essex offered patient assistance in providing scans and looking things up, and should be singled out for special mention.

Pau Medrano-Bigas, Catalan Professor of Design at the University of Barcelona got in touch with me when I was in the final stages of the book but showed instant generosity towards me and this book while working on his own Hassall project. It has been a pleasure to exchange emails and debate Hassall questions with 'my friend from Barcelona' and this book is undoubtedly enhanced by his efforts to help me track down further images.

I wish to thank the team at Unicorn Publishing: Lucy Duckworth, Ramona Lamport, Amber Lanfranchi and Felicity Price-Smith. As designer, Felicity in particular has put up with my demands and changes with superhuman forbearance and out of it has conjured a beautifully designed book. I think we are still speaking.

Geoffrey Beare at the Heath Robinson Museum has provided a venue for Hassall's work to be seen by a wider audience, as well as offering help with images for the book along the way. Thank you.

I would also like to acknowledge the generous help of the following: David Bownes of Twentieth Century Posters; Paul Liss and George Richards at Liss Fine Art; Vanessa Gibson, who lent items from the collection of her late father, Colin Narbeth; Michael Diamond; Patrick Bogue of Onslow's Auctioneers; Terry Shergal of Rennert's Gallery in New York; Laurence Heyworth of Look and Learn; Salah Ben-Halim of Hill House Antiques; Ken Blackmore, and David Stuart Cook (and his 'magic hat'). Thanks to Julie-Anne Lambert, curator of the John Johnson Collection at the Bodleian Library as well as other members of the Bodleian team. Thanks also to Tony Anderson and Lucy Willis, Gart Westerhout, Jerry Rendell, the Great War Group, Simon Lawrence of Fleece Press, Mark Warby of the Bruce Bairnsfather Society, Geoff West of *Illustrators* magazine, Michael Gray of the Savage Club, Don Grant and Hugh Gilbert of the London Sketch Club, Peter and Dawn Cope, Chris and Lesley Mees, Justin Hobson, Laura Ashman, David Wootton and Chris Beetles Gallery, Amanda-Jane Doran, Frank Lateur, Maryam Sammut, Fiona Macintosh, Mike Fenn, Robin Bledsoe, Guy Lawley, Carme Carreno Pombar, Ana Trivino and Begona Alvarez Ramos from the Institut del Teatre in Barcelona,

Mr Gabriel Pinos Guirao, Gothsland Gallery of Art, Barcelona, John Rae-Smith, John Byford, Steve Lerner and Skegness Council.

As always, thanks to my colleagues Mark Braund, Paul Brown, Tom Gillmor, Sarah Hedger and Jessica Talmage at Mary Evans Picture Library.

Special thanks to Mike Leigh for writing a warm, wise and witty foreword to this book. Your support is much appreciated. I daresay John Hassall would have been delighted with your words.

Finally, thank you to my friends, Terry Parker, who is always interested and generous with his time, and to Sam Royle, my cheerleader and a top chum. And to Clive, who kept on building while I kept on typing.

And thank you to John Hassall, who really did most of the work.

London, March 2021

PICTURE CREDITS

AKG; 185 right; **Alamy;** 139, 229; **Tony Anderson & Lucy Willis;** 83 top left; **Art Furniture;** 250 top; **Art History Research Net;** 21, 46, 49, 84 btm middle, 115, 142 btm right; **Geoffrey Beare;** 47, 62, 212 top, 219, 220-221; **Ken Blackmore;** 51, 88, 99, 103 top right, 105 btm left, 113, 117, 118, 119, 124 top left, 125, 126 top & btm left, 127, 129 left x 5, 138, 142 top, btm left, 143, 159, 167 top & btm right, 178 btm right, 180 btm left & right, 182 btm left, 183 btm, 201 btm, 202 top, 204 top, 253 middle; **Robin Bledsoe;** 201 top; **Bridgeman Images;** 230, 241; **Conservative Party Archives/Bodleian Library;** 146 top left, top right, 147, right; **David Stuart Cook;** 48 btm, 66 top, 71, 72, 90, 135 top right, 243, btm, 249 centre, 253 btm left; **Vanessa Gibson;** 50 top left,51 btm right, 64, 74, 79, 81, 101 top left, 106 btm right, 120 btm left, top right, 121 top right, btm left, 129 right, 148 top left, 152, top, 172 btm right, 196 top, 205, 215, 218, 222, btm right, 223 middle x 2, btm left, 228 top right, 243 top; **Gabriel Pinos Guirao/Gothsland Gallery of Art;** 192; **Mark Hassall;** 98 btm right, 105 btm left, 144 left; **Nicholas Hassall;** 153 right, 219, 245 btm; **Tom Hassall;** 25,27 btm, 169 left; **Hill House Antiques;** 245 centre, btm, 247, 248 top; **www.imagesmusicales.be;** 92; **Imperial War Museum;** 148 top right, 149 top right, 150 top left, top centre, bottom x 3, 151 top, 153 left; **Institut del Teatre;** 89 top right, 91 top left, btm left, btm right, 94 btm right, 95 btm left, 97 top right & btm, 103 btm right, 104 left centre, btm left, right, 106 btm left, top right, 108; **John Johnson Collection/Bodleian Library;** 96, 167 btm left, 168 top right, btm right, 172 top left, btm centre, 178 top right, 183 top, 187; **Simon Lawrence;** 78 btm; **Mike Leigh;** 228 btm; **Liss Llewellyn;** 84 middle left & right, btm right, 85 btm left & right, 245 top left, top centre; **London Transport Museum;** 188, 191; **Look & Learn;** 50 btm,116 btm left,128, 134 top,148 btm left, 171 right,181 top left,btm left,213, top x 3, btm & centre right,222 top left,223 top right,225,236; **Lyon & Turnbull;** 250 centre; **Mary Evans Picture Library;** 10, 12, 13, 14, 18, 35 btm right, 43, 52, 109btm left & right, 148 btm right, 164, 175 top, 193 btm x 2, 198 left, 202 btm, 216 left, 246 btm left; **Mary Evans/David Cohen Fine Art;** 151 btm, 152 btm centre; **Mary Evans/Michael Diamond;** 89 left, 93 left, 94 top left, btm left, 95 top left, top right, btm right, 102 btm left, 179 btm left; **Mary Evans/Historic England;** 10; **Mary Evans/Illustrated London News;** 15, 34, btm right, 35 btm left, 37, 44, 51 top right, 53, 60, 70, 100 btm left, right, 101 btm, 105, left centre, 109 top left, 120 top left, btm right, 121, top left, btm right, 132, 134 btm left & right, 135 top left, btm left, 140, 152 btm left, 161 btm right, 166, 177 btm right, 189 top & btm, 196 btm, 228 top left, 232, 246 btm right; **Mary Evans/March of the Women;** 144, right x 3; **Mary Evans/Onslows;** 102, btm left, 103 top left, 174 top left & right, 179 top right, 198 top right; **Mary Evans/Terry Parker;** 145 right, 178 top left, 217 top right; **Pau Medrano-Bigas;** 45 top, 133 left, 244; **Meredith family;** 36, 40 top left; **National Portrait Gallery;** 51 middle, 82; **Onslows Auctioneers;** 50 top right, 68, 93 right, 97 top left, top right, 98 top left, btm left, btm centre, 102 right, 103 btm left, 124 btm right, 137, 160, 168 left, 172, top right, 174 btm left, btm centre, 175 btm left, 177 top right, 190 left, 191, 193 top x 2, 197 mid right, 198 btm, 203, 208 right; **Princeton University;** 212 btm; **Rae-Smith Gallery;** 63 top; **Rennerts Gallery NYC;** 42, 91 top right, 106 top left, 107, 182 top left; **Maryam Sammut;** 249 btm right x 3; **Savage Club;** 79; **Science & Society Picture Library;** 176, 195, 197 top centre, top right, btm centre, btm right; **The Times/News Licensing;** 197 centre; **Twentieth Century Posters;** 9, 63 btm, 102 top left, 104, top left; **University of Essex, Special Collections;** 20, 22, 24, 26, 27 top, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 top, 33, 34 btm left, 35 top, 39, 40 btm, 41, 45 btm,51 top left, 54, 56, 57, 58, 59, 61, 65, 67, 69, 73, 75, 76, 77 top & btm left, 78 top, 80, 85, middle btm, 98 top right, 100 top left, 101 top middle & right, 105 top left, 109 top right, 100, 110, 116 top left, right, 122, 123, 124 top right, btm left, 126 right, 130, 131, 133 right, 136, 145 top left, 146 btm left, btm right, 147 top left, btm left, 149 left, 150 top right, 152 btm right, 154, 155 top right, 156 top right, btm right, 157, 162, 163, 165, 167 top left, 169 right, 170 left, 171, 173, 174 btm right, 175 btm right, 177 top left, 178 top left, top centre, 179 top left, 180 top left & right, 182 top & btm right, 183 btm, 185 left, 186 top left & right, 190 right, 194, 199, 203 btm, 208 left, 209, 210, 211, 214, 216 right, 217 top left, btm right, 222 top right, btm left, middle right, centre, 223 top left, btm right x 2, 224 btm x2, 227, 231, 233, 235, 238, 239, 240, 242 (top), 245 top right, 246 top left, 248 btm, 250 btm, 251 btm; 252 btm; **V&A Images;** 145 btm left; **Gart Westerhout;** 197 top left, 206, 207, 213 btm left, 220-1, 250 btm. **All other images from author's collection.**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aldin, Cecil – *Time I Was Dead* (Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1934)
Allen, W.E.D. – *David Allens, The History of a Family Firm 1857-1957* (John Murray, 1957)
Anderson, Anthony – *The Man Who Was H.M. Bateman* (Webb & Bower, 1982)
Bradshaw, Percy V. – *Brother Savages and Guests* (W.H. Allen, 1958)
Bradshaw, Percy V. – *Drawn from Memory* (Chapman & Hall, 1943)
Byford, John – *Jolly Fisherman Centenary Exhibition booklet* (Skegness Civic Society, 2008)
Cuppleditch, David – *The John Hassall Lifestyle* (Dilke Press, 1979)
Cuppleditch, David – *The London Sketch Club* (Alan Sutton Publishing, 1994)
Gosling, Lucinda – *Brushes and Bayonets* (Osprey Publishing, 2008)
Heron, Roy – *Cecil Aldin, The Story of a Sporting Artist* (Webb & Bower, 1981)
Hillier, Bevis – *Posters* (Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1969)
Hindley, Diana & Geoffrey – *Advertising in Victorian England 1837–1901* (Wayland, 1972)
Holt, Tonie and Valmai – *In Search of the Better 'Ole, The Life The Works and the Collectibles of Bruce Bairnsfather* (Milestone Publications, 1985)
Hutchison, Harold F. – *The Poster* (Studio Vista, 1968)
Johnson, A.E. – *John Hassall, R.I.* (Adam & Charles Black, 1913)
Raffe, W.G. – *Poster Design* (Chapman & Hall, 1929)

Digital resources, source material and periodicals:

arthistoryresearch.net – an unparalleled digital resource of art and design periodicals and publications from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
The *Poster* magazine
John Hassall Archives at the University of Essex, including press cuttings, Hassall's diaries, letters and log books
The *Illustrated London News* archive at Mary Evans Picture Library (now digitised and available to view through British Newspaper Archive)

INDEX