

# **CHARLES PAINE 1895-1967**

Charles Paine was born on 23rd October 1895 at 75 Charles Street, Pendleton, Salford and died on 7th July 1967 at his home, La Guerdainerie Cottage, Ville-a-l'evêque, Trinity, Jersey.

Paine's father, Charles, was manager in an india rubber works, so it is not surprising that Paine began his career with a trade training: a combination of art and industry that would mark his work. He studied at the Salford School of Art under Messrs P.J.J. Brooks and B.D. Taylor and was later apprenticed to the craft of stained glass and attended evening classes of the Manchester School of Art under Richard Glazier and Gordon Forsyth. He graduated to study at the Royal College of Art, London (1). At the RCA he was awarded a National Scholarship(2) a precursor of a grants scheme, and an indicator of some recognition of "quality" in his work. Paine spent a total of six terms at the RCA between October 1915 and 4th July 1919, interrupted by military service in the Admiralty Inspection Section (3). He graduated with the degree ARCA (Associate of the Royal College of Art). His time at the RCA was obviously successful as he left there to "take charge of the Applied Art Department of the Edinburgh College of Art". (4)

After Edinburgh, Paine worked in Glasgow designing stained glass for Guthrie and Wells. His Bathgate rose window and St Christopher for the U. F. Church at Girvan were particularly admired. He also had some success with posters he produced for the famous Frank Pick of London Underground. It was during this period that he met James Morton of the textile manufacturers. (5) In 1923 he went to Lancaster to study the actual production of fabrics at the works before designing advertisements for the firm (whose trademark was "Sundour"). From Lancaster he was "sent for to America where he took charge of the Applied Arts Department of the Community Arts Association of Santa Barbara" and produced an anti-tuberculosis campaign. (6) On his return to England he worked for Mr. C. S. Hobson before strengthening his links with the Baynard Press (which had printed many of his posters) and their Service Advertising Company.

In or around 1936 (7), Paine and his first wife moved to 43 Longcroft Lane, where they spent the war (8). Six posters of his from this period are known to us: the "Seasons" series "Spring", "Summer", "Autumn" (all dated 1939), and "Winter", (dated 1940); "Make your Home in Welwyn" (no date); and "Extra Special" (1939). Presumably they were commissioned by Welwyn Garden City Limited. "Extra Special" was issued by the Public Relations Department and the other five advertised houses for sale or rent in W.G.C. In addition he designed artwork for a series of leaflets promoting the new town's amenities.

In 1950 the Paines moved to Jersey, leaving their house and fridge (a technological taste presumably acquired in the USA) to their neighbours' daughter, Mrs. Clarkson (nee Hards) and her husband.

Paine was married at least twice. His first wife was Anna, an Estonian violinist from a musical family (her mother was an opera singer). She seems to have worked as Paine's assistant on stained glass jobs (9). It is likely that Anna died in Jersey too (10). Joan Jefferies Bolshaw was Paine's second wife. Harold Hards, the son of the family living in 45 Longcroft Lane, had kept contact with the Paines after their move, and once visited Charles and Anna at Gorey Pier. He tells that the story of Paine's second marriage was that after Anna's death, Paine was forced to spend a time in hospital. There he met Joan, (described by Mr. Hards as "The Matron") and married her (11).

Paine did have a son. He is a beneficiary of Paine's will, in which he is named as Charles Nelson Paine. The Hards tell that this son once visited the Paines in Welwyn Garden City.

Paine seems to have been universally liked. The Hards remember occasional gifts of sweets and maybe even toys handed over the garden hedge. Maurice de Soissons, son of Welwyn's architect, volunteered that he was "a very gentle person" (12). Paine's use of friends and neighbours as models demonstrates further his humanist personality. Mrs. Hard's youngest son was the model for the Christ Child in one of Paine's windows, and neighbours at Gorey Pier were apparently models for

Barabas and Mary Magdalene! Others point to his "puckish" or "impish" sense of humour (13). There is as yet no evidence to confirm that Paine (as suggested in the unreliable *Illustrators' Sourcebook 1850 - the present day*) was ever a *professional* cartoonist. He was renowned, however, for his "unofficial" cartoons. Mrs Hards has described how these little comments on his neighbours and fellow citizens of Welwyn Garden City would appear on her doormat at regular intervals. One of Paine's caricatures of a Mrs. Stock with "rather protruding teeth" was left accidentally on the seat at a concert she had organised. Chris Robins knew Paine through a circle of amateur artists, and described him as "ebullient", "good company", but did suggest that Paine was resolute in his opinions about artistic practice: he felt that Paine was sure that his way was right (14).

This, however, seems to have been the only subject (almost the only occasion) Paine voiced his opinions. Despite his arts and craft network and his ecclesiastic commissions, Paine never discussed art or design theory, religion or politics.

Informants also agree that Paine "did like a glass of wine" (15), or the occasional pint (16), and while living in Welwyn Garden, Paine would make regular trips to "the post" via the Cherry Tree (17) where Louis de Soissons seems to have been one of his drinking partners (18).

Paine continued to work while he stayed in Jersey, indeed, his will makes provision for the disposal of unfinished commissions. Harold Hards recalled seeing a work that the artist described as the achievement of a life-time in Paine's Gorey Pier studios. At that time, this had not gone beyond the cartoon, which Mr. Hards recalled as a network of crossing perspective lines, possibly of an industrial landscape. Chris Robins has provided the information that Paine was the artist employed in the redecoration of the foyer of the Grand Hotel, St. Helier (now again redecorated). Joan Williams is convinced that the tracings she saw at Gorey Pier were full size cartoons for stained glass windows (for Liverpool Cathedral, she thought).

Paine seems to have been a classic polymath in the arts and crafts tradition, freely moving from stained glass design and making, through fabric and poster work, to the design of interiors. Four of the companies that he worked for - Morton Sundour, London Underground, the Baynard Press and Second Garden City Ltd - create a distinct image of Charles Paine pointing to a man who seems to have been an "ethical modernist". Morton Sundour worked hard to develop an image of modern, designed fabrics often against the demands of mass distributors. (19) London Underground's modernisation through self-conscious design has become famous. The Baynard Press had an "ethical" modern project that they were more than honest about, proclaiming it wholeheartedly. In *The Baynard Book of Badges*, (20) which contains a Paine illustration, they emphasise the originality of their artists' work. Elsewhere they state "The Baynard Ideal": "To use the designs of modern artists appropriately and fine type intelligently to put beauty born of simplicity into every printed thing". (21) For them, "The poster artist is the Cicero of the hoardings .... He raises armies and rations food. He helps hospitals and builds garden cities. He elects members of parliament and counsels the citizen. The poster hoarding is the poor man's picture gallery." (22) Charles Paine was a poster artist who quite literally helped to build a garden city.

Paine's early work was quite different from the stock of "old cocoa" advertising of the period, which *Commercial Art* journal somewhere characterises as dominated by blonde girls, dark girls, "girls of any sort", and must have contributed to his initial success. By the mid 1920s this approach (large blocks of colour boldly handled) was becoming commonplace, but Paine's arts and crafts modernism was respected enough to receive repeated entries in *Commercial Art* throughout the period until around 1930 when that journal (as *Commercial Art and Industry*, then *Art and Industry*) (23) came under the influence of European Modernism. It is significant that Paine's last appearance in *Art and Industry* was in a retrospective "Forgotten Landmarks III", 1924 "Posters and their Designers" (24). It is tempting to attribute his bold handling of solid colour to his arts and crafts "back to the workshop" ethos and his experience in stained glass and textile design.

The images of nature which feature in the series of posters belonging to Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service demonstrate a key theme in Paine's work, described once by one nonetheless complimentary reviewer of an earlier piece as "recollect[ing] the naive outlook of his earlier life ... [with] a delightful interpretation of four little duckies swimming prettily across a noble stream". (25) Although this is a difficult interpretation of that particular image, Jocelyn Morton notes that Paine's "whimsical personality" was as striking as "the imaginative quality of his work". (26)

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Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service  
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- (1) Horace Taylor, "The Work of Charles Paine". *Commercial Art* new series, vol ii, 1927, p233
- (2) *Record of Occupations of RCA Students After Leaving the College from October 1907*, kept by C. A. Fitzroy (?), unpublished ms in RCA. Thanks to Professor Christopher Frayling for gloss on "NS".
- (3) Charles Paine's correspondence record docket, unpublished ms held at RCA.
- (4) Horace Taylor, op cit, p234
- (5) Jocelyn Morton, *Three Generations of a Family Textile Firm*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1971, p280
- (6) Horace Taylor, op cit, p236
- (7) Interview with Mrs Gladys Hards, her daughter Mrs. Clarkson and her son Mr. Harold Hards, Thursday 6th August 1992. (Welwyn Hatfield Museum Service oral history archive, tape 60)
- (8) For his address in 1944 thanks to Mrs Margot Donald of Edinburgh College of Art Library, and Joanna Soden of the Royal Scottish Academy Library. Paine exhibited "My Soul Doth Magnify the Lord" at a RSA open exhibition in 1944, giving the address 43 Longcroft Lane, Welwyn Garden City. The catalogue entry was 603; it was not for sale.
- (9) Hards Interview, op cit
- (10) Joan Williams, one of the Paines' neighbours at Gorey Pier, telephone conversation with Ambrose Hogan, Wednesday 19th August 1992.
- (11) Hards Interview, op cit
- (12) Maurice de Soissons, telephone conversation with Ambrose Hogan, Monday 14th September 1992.
- (13) Hards interview, op cit, Joan Williams, op cit
- (14) Chris Robins, telephone conversation with Ambrose Hogan, Friday 14th September 1992.
- (15) Chris Robins, op cit
- (16) Joan Williams, op cit
- (17) Hards interview, op cit
- (18) Maurice de Soissons, op cit
- (19) Morton, op cit, p285
- (20) Sanders Philips & Co. Ltd., *The Baynard Book of Badges*, London 1921.
- (21) *The Baynard Press*, leaflet held in the Special Collections of the National Art Library. Late 1930s?

- (22) Sanders Philips and Co. Ltd. op cit, p18
- (23) The name changes are significant in themselves.
- (24) *Editorial Art & Industry*, vol 44, 1948 pp129-137
- (25) *Commercial Art*, vol 1, no 10, August 1923, p235
- (26) Jocelyn Morton, op cit, p280