

**An investigation into the design, production and display
contexts of industrial safety posters produced by the
Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents during
WW2 and a catalogue of posters**

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Figure 1. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Stow Tools Safely

Think of the Man Below"

1942

Eckersley Archive LCC

Abstract

The industrial safety posters produced by Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) during WW2 are evidence of a politically progressive, socially engaged and mass-produced graphic communication in Britain. These characteristics allow the RoSPA posters to qualify, by Walter Benjamin's criteria, as exemplars of Modernist cultural production in the age of mechanical reproduction.

The emergence of these images, within the unlikely context of war, is evidence of the social change identified by George Orwell as a necessary condition of victory. Furthermore, the presence of this material, within an English context, counters the prevailing orthodoxy of an English resistance to Modernism.

The thesis describes the administrative and technical determinants of the posters, as indicated by the structure of RoSPA, the personalities behind the campaign and the technical expertise of the printers; Loxley Brothers of Sheffield. Quaker and Nonconformist antecedents are revealed to define the values of both administration and printers.

The thesis explores the RoSPA posters' use of Surrealist techniques and iconography and also their appeal to a wider and international Left community. The address of the RoSPA posters to the neophyte industrial worker offers the opportunity, exemplified by the special case of women workers, to project an "imagined community" beyond the normal tribal and class distinctions of British society through "Social Vision." The RoSPA posters make explicit a connection, within English Modernism, between community, technology, progress and dissent. A catalogue of posters is appended to the thesis.

The RoSPA posters reaffirm the progressive, emancipatory and radical quality of the popular experience of the Home-Front in Britain during WW2. The social changes, precipitated by the circumstances of war, of which the RoSPA posters are a manifestation, alter the role of graphic designer in relationship to community through an embrace of technology. The concept of graphic authorship is, in consequence, irrevocably changed.

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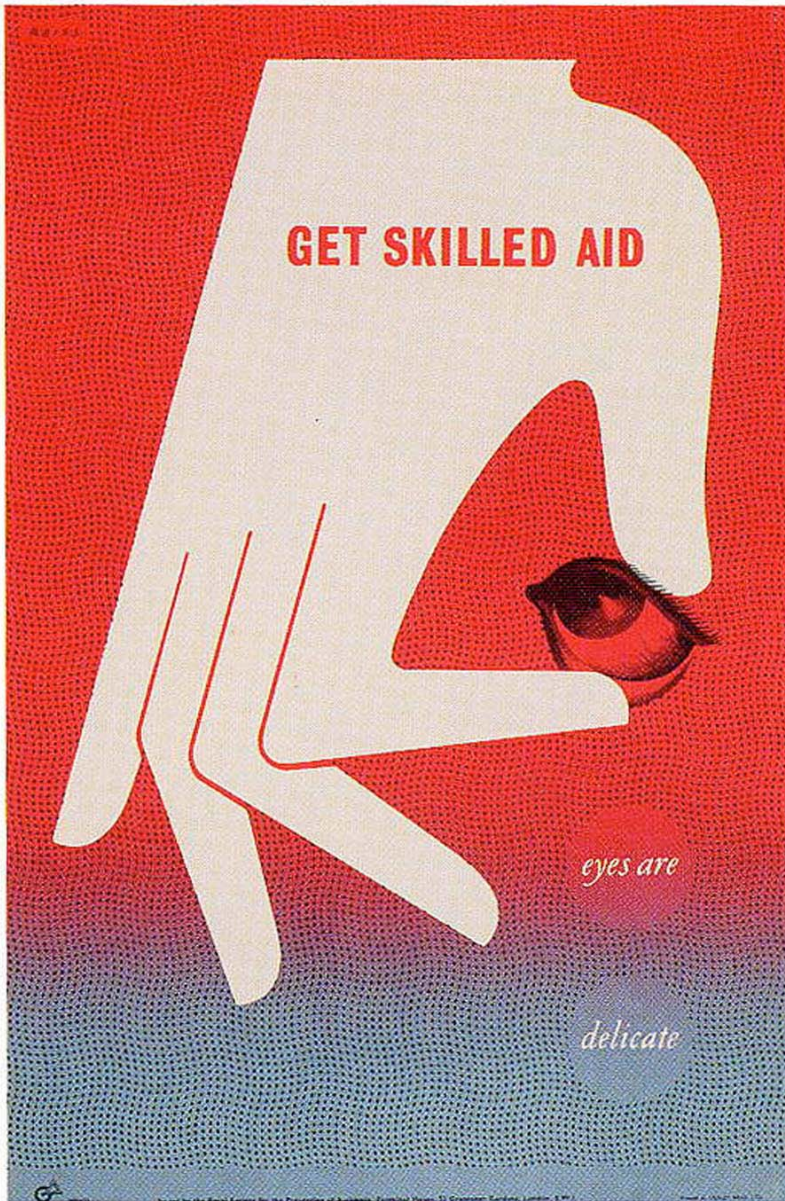


Figure 2. RoSPA poster by Manfred Reiss

"Get Skilled Aid

Eyes Are Delicate"

1945

Paul & Karen Rennie Collection

Introduction

In the Second World War the British people came of age. This was a people's war...¹

A J P Taylor

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (hereafter RoSPA) is an organisation devoted to the promotion of safety education on the road, in the home and in the workplace. During WW2 (1939-45) RoSPA produced a series of accident prevention posters aimed at the neophyte industrial labour supporting the military efforts of "total war."²

A group of these posters is held within the Eckersley Archive at the London College of Communication and these provide the material starting point for this thesis.

The RoSPA posters are, within the contexts of graphic design history, of poster history and of industrial safety propaganda, unique for their time. Their sudden appearance, within the context of war, is surprising and this work is the first attempt at a detailed presentation and contextualisation of this graphic material.

¹ Taylor (1970) pp581-583 describes the political background to war between 1940-41. The term "People's War" is credited to John Marchbank, General Secretary of the National Union of Railwaymen, who first used it in 1941. Quoted in Briggs (2000) p8.

² The RoSPA Archive is held at the University Library, Liverpool but does not include any poster material.

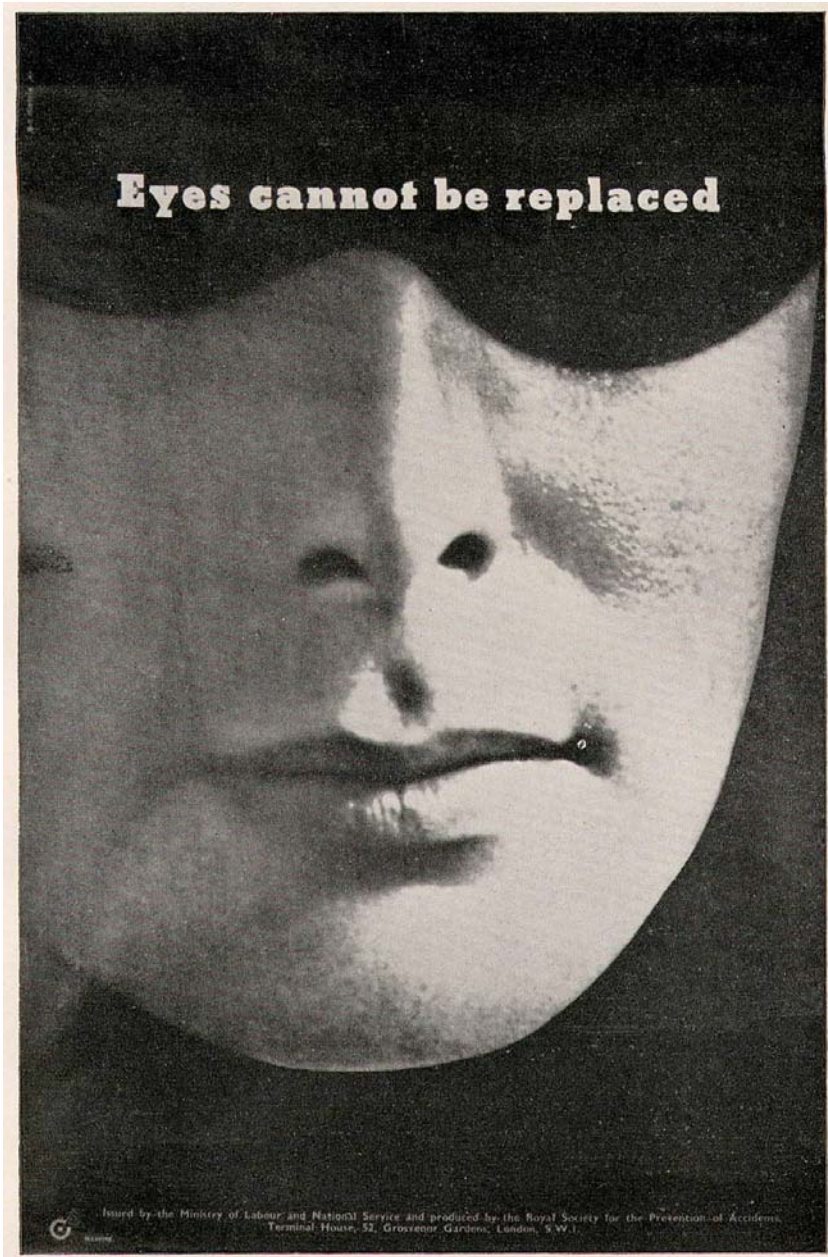


Figure 3. RoSPA poster by G R Morris

"Eyes Cannot Be Replaced"

1944

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

A measure of the significance and achievement of RoSPA's accident prevention propaganda (of which the posters are the most important element) is evident, within the context of industrial production at war, from the greatly reduced level of accidents reported within the workplace. Lord McGowan, President of RoSPA, claimed that, "within the chemical industry a period of two million accident-free man-hours had been recorded."³

This achievement is the more impressive for having been made against a background of industrial expansion (some industries doubled in size in terms of infrastructure and workforce) and against a more urgently imperative demand for increased production (often from workers newly drafted into industrial employment). To have achieved this within the context of war and by appeal to the consideration of personal safety and collective responsibility, rather than by threat of discipline or censure, is especially remarkable. The RoSPA campaigns may therefore be considered to have helped the war effort decisively and to have improved the quality of life of the industrial worker.

³ These figures were quoted by Lord McGowan in the *"Annual Report to RoSPA Members"* of 1944. The report is held in the RoSPA Archive at the University of Liverpool. National Executive Committee papers (D.226/2/1).

The statistical record of accidents in industry was maintained, initially, by the Factory Inspectorate. More recently figures have been collected by the Health and Safety Executive who report, in turn, to the Office of National Statistics. The criteria by which "reportable accidents" are reported and judged have been constantly changed as a consequence of policy. The comparison of accident figures, over time, is therefore considered meaningless. Nowadays RoSPA do not themselves collect national statistical data on industrial, or occupational health injuries. In 1965 it was reported that twice as many people were killed and injured (204,000) in British factories compared with on British roads (see Archer (1965) in *"Design"* 202).



Figure 4. RoSPA poster by H A Rothholz

"No Room for Horse-Play Here"

1944

Imperial War Museum

The Posters

The major collection of RoSPA posters is held by the Imperial War Museum, London. The Victoria and Albert Museum, London, has a small selection of RoSPA posters, as does the Museum für Gestaltung, Zürich, Switzerland.⁴

The Estate of the designer Abram Games has archive copies of his designs for RoSPA, as does the Estate of his colleague H R (Arnold) Rothholz. In addition there are several private collections that include some of these posters.⁵ I have also made use of posters and other material held by Paul and Karen Rennie. None of these collections has anything more than a representative selection of RoSPA posters and none of the institutional collections display their RoSPA holdings.

The frontispiece and figures 1 to 6 (pages 2, 6, 8, 10, 12 and 14) show a sample of RoSPA's wartime poster output to provide a visual introduction to the thesis and give a sense of what distinguishes these posters from the other propaganda material of WW2. The posters show the characteristic features of split-duct printing (figure 2 p6)⁶ and show the use of photography as an integral part of poster design for RoSPA (figure 3 p8).

⁴ The Collection is attached to the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst. Most of the images in Zürich are post-war and it seems they were collected as support material for teaching at the school. Aynsley (2000) p8 identifies the collections held by art schools as a source of valuable information.

⁵ I am grateful to Lynn Trickett, Michael Nathan, Ian Grush, Paul Bedford, Jonathan Swift and Andrew Ross for access to their collections of RoSPA and other posters.

⁶ The process is characterised by clearly defined horizontal blocks of colour.



Figure 5. RoSPA poster by Jan Lewitt and George Him (Lewitt-Him)

"The Smallest Wound May Cause the Biggest Trouble"

1944

Imperial War Museum

The 1930s had been a period of graphic experimentation in Britain with various designers, particularly the American Edward McKnight Kauffer and the artist Paul Nash, experimenting with how to integrate photographic elements into the prevailing painterly aesthetic of British poster design.⁷

The use of photography in poster design was held back by the technical difficulties of printing large areas from half-tone blocks. These technical constraints were resolved only at the very end of the 1930s. The incorporation of photomechanical processes into the printing industry was further delayed by the entrenched resistance of the craftsmen artisans within the industry and by the reluctance of owners and shareholders to invest in new machinery.⁸

Also, there are posters that use humour to make their point (figure 4 p10). RoSPA were aware that factory horseplay had its origins in the initiation practices amongst workers and were conscious of the need to maintain good-humour in the factory. In consequence the RoSPA posters are often light-hearted and humorous, avoiding the calls to discipline and productivity that are characteristic of, as we shall see, most wartime industrial propaganda.

⁷ Paul Nash (1889-1946) is an important figure in the history of British Modernism. He taught at the Royal College of Art and made no distinction between the fine arts and design. He was given a Kodak "Box Brownie" camera by his wife Margaret and used it extensively from the late 1920s onwards. Nash then used the photographs as a starting point for the symbolic rhetoric of his paintings. Nash produced several posters designs for Frank Pick at London Transport and, during the late 1930s, was experimenting with the use of photographs and painterly effects in poster design. See Green (2001) pp84-85. Nash was indirectly involved with the RoSPA campaign through recommendations, adopted by the Ministry of Labour, from his Oxford Bureau. See Gardiner (2004)p405.

⁸ Gilmour (1977) pp22-23 describes the prevailing conservatism of lithographic printing in Britain by reference to the exception of Harold Curwen.

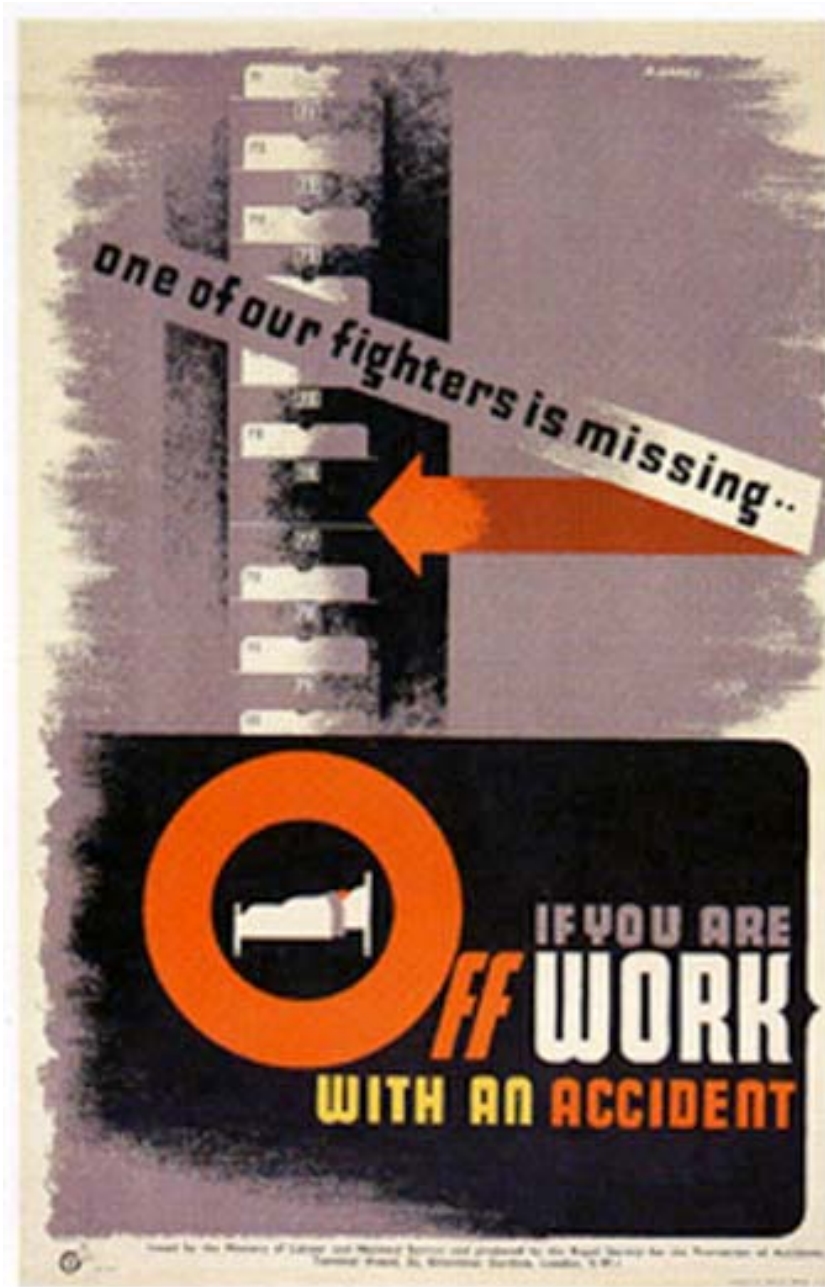


Figure 6. RoSPA poster by Abram Games

"One Of Our Fighters is Missing..."

"If You Are Off Work With an Accident"

1944

Imperial War Museum

Tom Eckersley combined his work in design with map-making in the RAF (figure 1 p2).⁹ Pat Keely (see frontspiece) had established himself as a poster designer during the 1930s. His tiny stature exempted him from active service. Manfred Reiss (figure 2 p6), Arnold Rothholz (figure 4 p10), Jan Lewitt, and George Him (figure 5 p12) were all émigré designers who had arrived in Britain before 1939. Abram Games was the most prolific poster designer of the war through his appointment as Official Poster Designer at the War Office.¹⁰ The circumstances of his role there left him no time for other commissions and the war was effectively an interruption in his association with RoSPA which had begun in 1938 and continued again immediately after the war. A single wartime RoSPA poster by Games is recorded (figure 6 p14).¹¹ Games developed a dramatic poster style perfectly suited to the unambiguous messages required of graphic communication within the military.

⁹ Tom Eckersley (1914-1997) was one of Britain's foremost graphic designers during the 20th century. He was a prolific poster designer throughout his life and made a significant and crucial contribution to design education through his long association with the London College of Communication. See Hollis (1997).
Eckersley had first worked on safety themes for the NSFA's ARP campaign in 1939.

¹⁰ Sparke (1986) p52.

¹¹ Games, Moriarty and Rose (2003) pp188-191 corroborate this by listing only one RoSPA poster from the war (1944). Other RoSPA posters by Games are listed as from late 1938, early 1939 and from 1946 onwards.

RoSPA

The origins of RoSPA may be traced to the London Road Safety campaign of 1917.¹² Their first campaigns were aimed at educating the metropolitan public about the dangers of increased traffic, especially in the difficult conditions of the blackout during war.¹³ It is therefore true to say that the origins of RoSPA coincide almost exactly with the beginnings of Modern, or “total war.” That is a war involving military combatants and civilian populations and where both were considered legitimate targets.¹⁴

RoSPA’s Industrial Service was created as a consequence of the Factories Act of 1937.¹⁵ Before that date RoSPA’s activities had been focussed primarily on road safety and home safety. The 1930s was the period during which car ownership became much more widespread in England and also when speed restrictions were liberalised on British roads. RoSPA was therefore, along with the Automobile Association and the Royal Automobile Club, one of several organisations involved in lobbying Government on aspects of the motoring debate. It would be accurate to characterise RoSPA at this time as primarily a road safety organisation.

¹² The campaign was instigated as a consequence of a meeting called by Mr (later Sir) Herbert Blain, on 1st December 1916, RoSPA Archive, “*Introductory Notes to the RoSPA Archive Catalogue*,” compiled by Adrian Allan, Archivist.

¹³ Blackouts were introduced as a consequence of German air raids between September 1917 and May 1918. The first bombing raids were carried out from Zeppelin airships. Subsequently they were launched from Gotha GV bombers.

¹⁴ Calvocoressi and Wint (1972) p132 describes the alignment of military power, capital and labour as characteristic of “total war.”

¹⁵ The Act enshrined a responsibility, on behalf of owners, for the safety and welfare of their workers.

By the outbreak of WW2, in September 1939, RoSPA had established itself as a safety organisation of national scope.¹⁶ Its three main areas of activity concerned accident prevention on the road, in the home and at the workplace. RoSPA were conscious of the increased responsibilities attached to their work in time of war and Lord McGowan, president of RoSPA, expressed the importance of RoSPA's work by observing that, "an accident in the works is as much a gain to the enemy as a casualty in the armed forces."¹⁷ In 1940 he expressed a similar sentiment with more force, "one of our fighters is missing if you are off work with an accident."¹⁸ These views were projected beyond the RoSPA membership by the Prime Minister, Winston Churchill,¹⁹ who said that, "the factory and the fighting front are one."²⁰

The significance of factory safety was projected beyond the military concerns of production and armaments and towards the civilian population. The projection of safety values was supported, beyond RoSPA, by the wide ranging use of newspaper reporting and the production of small-scale printed ephemera. By these means was safety

¹⁶ War was declared against Germany after the invasion, by German forces, of Poland. WW2 began at 11am on September 3rd 1939.

¹⁷ Lord McGowan addressing RoSPA conference at the Royal Albert Hall 1939. RoSPA Archive, National Executive Committee papers (D.266/2/1).

¹⁸ Lord McGowan addressing the RoSPA membership 1940. RoSPA Archive, National Executive Committee papers (D.266/2/1).

¹⁹ Churchill was appointed leader of a Coalition War-Cabinet in May 1940. The creation of the War-Cabinet was a dramatic response to a state of emergency in declining British fortunes in the war. The Coalition drew members from all Parliamentary parties and from outside Westminster politics. The creation of the War-Cabinet marked the beginning of a period when "normal" political differences were suspended. The circumstances surrounding the creation of the War-Cabinet are described by Hennessy (1992) pp68-69.

²⁰ Winston Churchill in a "*Parliamentary Speech*" and radio broadcast, June 1940. The evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force from Dunkirk, beginning 27th May 1940, was immediately recast as a "peculiar kind of victory". Taylor (1970) p592 notes that, "almost the entire BEF was saved. (But) It has lost virtually all its guns, tanks and other heavy equipment." Dunkirk therefore signalled the beginning of an urgent production effort to re-equip British forces before a probable German invasion. The production effort was mobilized, during 1941, against a backdrop of political confrontation between the differing productive responsibilities of Beaverbrook and Bevin in the War Cabinet.

attached, like saving and recycling, to the patriotic model of good citizenship.

Preparations for war had greatly extended the facilities available for shelter and for first aid. It was frustrating, for the agencies involved, to discover that those facilities were, at least in 1939, being used mostly by people who had injured themselves in the blackout or at work; rather than been victims of enemy attack.²¹

The RoSPA Archive holds a reference to some two-colour stock posters that were produced for distribution by the Industrial Service during 1939.²² There is no record of any corresponding account book entry to show that these posters were actually printed and circulated. The Industrial Service was a new initiative for RoSPA even at the outbreak of war in September 1939. The circumstances of war changed the relative importance of the Industrial Service within RoSPA and it grew, within a short space of time, to have the largest subscriber base of the three RoSPA services. The impact of Ernest Bevin's Ministry of Labour in facilitating this transformation in the unlikely circumstances of war is revealed as crucial.

The Industrial Service provided a regular supply of RoSPA pictorial posters and supporting text material for its membership. The Industrial Service encouraged the cultivation, at local level, of close links with newspaper publishers. Reports of successful safety campaigns were

²¹ See Mass Observation (1942) p205 and 207 for a description of the problem.

²² RoSPA Archive, University of Liverpool, Publicity Committee papers (D.266/5/4).

judged an effective form of promotion for safety awareness. Furthermore, it established the structure whereby safety issues could be successfully addressed and progress monitored within member factories and workshops. A Regional Committee structure was established to oversee safety progress and to report to headquarters.

The surprising magnitude of print media and cultural production during WW2 is revealed by Robert Harling's introductory comments on book production in 1946 which states that, "during a period of strict governmental control and thus restricted competition, almost 5,000 different journals are still published in this country."²³ The quantities of graphic communications including posters required by the effort of war were even more staggering.²⁴ It is also worth noting that the prolonged nature of the war destroyed the political economy of press advertising and practically bankrupted the conservative print media. The intervention of the state was therefore crucial.²⁵

The propaganda demands of the war economy required an engagement, on the part of administrators, designers and printers, with the technologies of mechanical reproduction.

²³ Robert Harling in Read (1946) pp207-209.

²⁴ A selection of this material is presented in Osley (1995).

²⁵ Noted in Orwell's "*London Letter*" 15th April 1941 in Orwell (1967) p138.

Graphic Design and Mechanical Reproduction

The RoSPA posters are all a uniform size, twenty inches wide by thirty high, portrait.²⁶ This is a standard paper size known as “double crown.” The posters all have the details of RoSPA in the lower margin along with the emblem of the Industrial Service – a warning triangle and industrial gearwheel. Below this text are the details of publication and the name of the printers, Loxley Brothers of Sheffield.

In visual terms it is immediately clear that the posters avoid any pictorial reference to the obviously upsetting consequences of industrial injury. There is no attempt to shock or distress, or to show the physical damage caused by heavy or powerful machinery. In stylistic terms the most obvious characteristic of these posters, as a group, is that they make use of photographic elements in their design and use mechanical tints to establish texture and relief within the design.

RoSPA posters often attempt to integrate image and type into a coherent design, using different typographic elements within a short message. This is characteristic of the Modernist ideas expressed by Laszlo Moholy-Nagy in his *“Painting Photography Film”* first published as number eight in the “Bauhaus Book” series in 1925 and identified as “typo-photo.”²⁷

²⁶ There are a few exceptions where posters were printed two-to-a-page for reasons of economy. The resulting posters are half sheets cut top-to-bottom. They were produced using the same machines and processes at Loxley Brothers so that they may be counted as uniform with the main part of the campaign.

²⁷ Laszlo Moholy Nagy (1895-1946) was born in Hungary and taught at the Bauhaus between 1923-28. In addition to his work as photographer, film-maker and designer he was a powerful advocate of new ideas in design. He came to England in 1935 and moved to America in 1937. The book was published in English translation 1969. The origins and

Moholy-Nagy's argument was that the proper synthesis of typography and image would create a new kind of symbolic language ideal for the representation of the Modern world. Moholy anticipated the evolution of a coherent visual language that drew elements from the emerging visual languages of film and photography in addition to the more established vocabulary and symbolism of painting and the fine arts. Moholy's polemic argued for the emergence of the creative potential of light as both creative agent and symbol of a new "hygienic organisation of the world through new visual symbols."²⁸

The use of these techniques in the graphic design of posters in Britain is unusual and needs to be accounted for. There is a remarkable self-confidence in the design of these posters that is revealed in the willingness to leave empty, conveniently economical, space around the design and also in the use of a point-of-view that over-scales the image so as to create sense of monumentality. These are characteristics of effective poster design.

The development of an avant-garde graphic style derived and progressing from experiments in Abstraction and Constructivism and also embracing photography and Surrealism had been welcomed by Alfred Barr, Director of New York's Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), in 1936. He hoped it would begin to replace what he considered the over-crowded

development of "typo-photo" in Germany has been described by Jeremy Aynsley (2000) pp100-101.

²⁸ Aynsley (2000) p101 suggests that this term carries with it a reaction to the circumstances of the previous years of war, poverty and political unrest. It was also possibly used, rather unhelpfully, in connection with the social hygiene policies, or eugenics, followed by the German Dictatorship after 1933.

My own understanding is that Moholy means the term to refer to a "rational process of visual communication."

design and banal realism of most Anglo-American advertising images. The development of an International Modernist style and the relationship between artistic avant-gardes and the poster form in design has been comprehensively detailed by Ades (1984).²⁹

Ades tacitly accepts Barr's thesis and declares that WW2 was a period of avant-gardist crisis and marked a permanent rupture between design and the avant-garde. Her argument supports the view that the war marked a resurgence of reactionary visual rhetoric. By understanding the advent of war as a crisis the association between the avant-garde and the progressive values of Modernism calls into question the radical quality of the popular experience of the war in Britain. The argument therefore plays unwittingly into the hands of declinists.

I believe that the RoSPA posters are evidence of the evolution, in Britain, of a more complex Modernism, one that is configured by a combination of both ruptures and continuities and is therefore distinguished from its contemporary counterparts. The RoSPA posters provide compelling evidence of a successful integration of avant-gardist and foreign elements into the British design community.

The stylistic characteristics of the RoSPA campaign are normally associated with avant-garde and Modernist forms of European graphic design during the 1920s and 30s. It is therefore remarkable to find them amongst the propaganda output of Britain during WW2. It is remarkable

²⁹ Ades (1984) pp22-70 "*Function and Abstraction in Poster Design.*"

because the graphic design environment in Britain had, before 1939 and in the context of poster art, eschewed these kinds of Modernism in favour of a painterly artistic style. The advertising campaigns of London Transport and Shell-Mex and BP Ltd are usually identified with this artistic tendency and are well known.³⁰ The posters produced by London Underground are included in standard and international histories of poster design such as Weill (1984) *"The Poster"* and Timmers (1998) *"Power of the Poster"*. London Transport have themselves published accounts of their advertising activities by Laver (1949), and by Hutchinson (1963) and more recently by Green (1990).

Furthermore there is an acknowledgement of Frank Pick, the managing director of London Transport, as a pioneer of integrated design and of corporate identity.³¹ Pick's biographer, Christian Barman, has characterised Pick's war experience as an "unhappy and frustrating period" in his life.³² In fact Pick had become an unlikely friend of Ernest Bevin and it probable that Bevin's use of visual propaganda in the service of his greater political vision owes much to Pick's guiding intelligence and example.

Hall (1972) identified the photographic reportage of *"Picture Post"* during WW2 as a manifestation of a Social-Democratic project that was a consequence of the radicalisation implicit in the popular experience of

³⁰ See Hewitt (1998) pp2-3 on the Shell poster campaign and Green (1990) on London Transport.

³¹ Frank Pick (1878-1941).

³² Barman (1979) p263.

war. The RoSPA posters are an equally significant manifestation of these forces and deserve to be better known.

The Project

The primary objective of this thesis is to introduce a body of work, the RoSPA posters, by a group of various designers. These posters confound the orthodoxies of graphic design and social history in Britain – that the British were resistant to Modernism and that war propaganda marked a retreat to the banal and literal in visual communications. These introductory remarks chart the critical foundations of the thesis.

The cultural significance of poster images is both obvious and frustratingly difficult to pin down. The images and artefacts themselves offer a vivid glimpse into the past and continue to communicate their messages with immediacy and precision. Frustratingly, the artefacts themselves are fragile and survive, often by accident, in a haphazard and uncoordinated way. It is worth contrasting the fate of posters with that of other printed material which is routinely saved to provide the basis of future academic study – books, magazines and newspapers are collected by the British Library in a systematic way; posters are not.

The academic study of posters within the emerging disciplines of design and cultural history has been further undermined by the general absence of supporting material that would show how poster campaigns were devised, developed and implemented. The existence and use of such supporting material would allow the conjectures derived from the poster images themselves to be substantiated. The poster images themselves might, thereby, begin to assume a more important significance as

historical evidence. The RoSPA posters were produced within the particular context of WW2 and as part of an administrative organisation with close links to the political establishment in Britain. The existence of the RoSPA Archive immediately provides the posters with a more substantive status as the starting point for this research.

In order to support and draw-out the substantive potential of these poster images appeal is made to the theoretical writings of Walter Benjamin, Theodor Adorno and Antonio Gramsci. Benjamin's writings are acknowledged within the contemporary literature of graphic design history as providing the model by which the progressive potential of cultural production can be itemised.

This project examines the specific context of poster production in Britain by appeal to Benjamin's criteria and by reference to the technical and commercial determinants prevailing in Britain until WW2. Adorno and Gramsci describe how the political significance of popular culture may be critically understood. Crucially, both Gramsci and George Orwell, who was writing in a contemporary English context, provide a framework for social transformation that recognises the radical potential of ordinary people.³³

The conditions under which artists and graphic designers might successfully engage with society, by means of a cultural production that is Modernist and progressive in its values and properly political in its

³³ This potential was also noted by Tom Wintringham, the Anarchist founder of the Home Guard. See Purcell (2004).

ambitions, have been itemised by Walter Benjamin (1934).³⁴ The bonafides of this production are determined entirely by economy of production, mechanical reproduction (so as to assure mass production) and their distribution to as great an audience as possible.³⁵

Benjamin (1934) argued for a new kind of cultural production in his essay "*The Author as Producer*." This text was first presented in Paris at the Institute for the Study of Fascism. Benjamin puts the case for an "advanced form of cultural production" that sides with the proletariat in the class struggle and that is prepared to sacrifice the author's own autonomy for the benefits of that struggle.³⁶ Benjamin locates the most powerful engine of this re-casting of cultural production in the popular arts of journalism and photography. Graphic design, if it had been identifiable by him, would surely have been included in this set.

Benjamin argued that it was insufficient for a Left sympathising artist think of cultural production as independent of social relations and property ownership. Instead of asking how the work relates "to" the prevailing modes of production, we should ask how the work operates "within" them.³⁷ Benjamin recalled the "Levyi Front" writers and championed Sergei Tretiakov as an author who "seized on the new technologies and forms of expression. Joined the peasant communities

³⁴ The radical democratisation of cultural life implicit in Benjamin's essay is analysed in the introduction, by Peter Demetz, to the collection of Benjamin's essays "*Reflections*."

³⁵ Demetz (1978) ppxxxiii-xxxv.

³⁶ Benjamin (1934) p220.

³⁷ See Demetz (1978) pxxxiii in his introductory essay.

in the Russian countryside, organised newspapers on the walls, and brought radio and movies to the villages.”³⁸

The quality of the work is not, in consequence, discerned merely through its stylistic characteristics but also in the narratives of intervention that describe radical authorship. The traditional autonomy of bourgeois authorship (providing commentary on events) is replaced by a active participation in events.³⁹ That active participation is exemplified by Ernest Bevin’s commandeering of the RoSPA campaign and the contributions of the designers who worked for it. Accordingly, the poster images reaffirm the radical qualities of the popular experience of WW2 in Britain.

Benjamin’s optimistic belief was that these new forms of cultural communication would be resistant to assimilation within the normal channels of bourgeois and capitalist culture. Indeed, Benjamin hoped that these new forms would, eventually, change the nature of capitalist production by exposing their limitations from within. Benjamin’s underestimated the capacity of the capitalist apparatus to appropriate technical developments and to use them to further buttress its ideology.

To emphasise his point Benjamin contrasts the work of the great photomontagist John Heartfield with that of the photographer Renger-Patzsch. The former, suggests Benjamin, “has transformed every book jacket into a political instrument.”⁴⁰ Whilst the latter’s strategy of matter-

³⁸ Demetz (1978) pxxxiv.

³⁹ Benjamin (1934) p228.

⁴⁰ Benjamin (1934) p229.

of-factness has merely reduced “everything to the object of enjoyment.”⁴¹ Benjamin identifies Renger-Patzsch as “a flagrant example of what it means to supply a productive apparatus without changing it.”⁴² Benjamin has identified the political potential of cultural production and the strategy for its radical operation within the prevailing orthodoxies. Accordingly, a light is cast onto the structure of the apparatus by which the dominant elements of society supports themselves.

Benjamin (1936) continued his examination of the political potential of cultural production with his subsequent essay “*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.*” This second essay gave Benjamin the opportunity to explore the relationship between politics and art and to suggest that as art became political; politics would become increasingly aestheticised. Benjamin wrote that, “To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the authentic print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production; the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics.”⁴³

Theodor Adorno further described the supporting structure of cultural production identified by Benjamin. This was presented through the concept of “cultural hegemony” whereby the dominant ideological interests in society reproduce and continue that ideology and its class

⁴¹ Benjamin (1934) p230.

⁴² Benjamin (1934) p230.

⁴³ Benjamin (1936) p226.

relations.⁴⁴ Adorno and the Frankfurt School were pioneers of the study of the political ramifications of popular culture but they were not political activists. The RoSPA posters are one manifestation of a shift in “cultural hegemony” that occurred in Britain during WW2. The expression of that shift through new channels of cultural production wrong-footed the political establishment.

The political philosopher and activist who did the most to describe the idea of “cultural hegemony” and to begin to articulate political strategies that would lead to a change in the prevailing cultural values was the Italian Antonio Gramsci. Gramsci’s writings were not widely known outside of Italy until the early 1970s when his *“Prison Notebooks”* were translated for the first time. Gramsci was committed to the political struggle and the revolutionary outcomes of his strategies make them too strong for the British context that has tended to avoid the bitter class antagonisms that fuel revolutionary politics.⁴⁵ However, Gramsci was able, through the writings of his *“Prison Notebooks,”* to shed important light on the ideological structures of capitalist societies and on the concept of “cultural hegemony” appearing as a “naturalised,” or common sense, set of values.

⁴⁴ The concept of “cultural hegemony” emerges in the course of a correspondence between Adorno and Benjamin during 1935. The correspondence is included in Jameson (1977) pp110-150.

⁴⁵ The revolutionary potential of nascent class antagonisms in Britain were exploited, where possible, by Communists and Anarchist elements. Probably the best known of these *revolutionaries* was Tom Wintringham. See Purcell (2004).

Gramsci was writing during the period of political upheaval in Italy, which witnessed the rise of the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini.⁴⁶ The same period also saw the successful evolution of industrial capitalism into Italy with its emphasis on the “Taylorist,” or “Fordist,” specialisation of labour.⁴⁷ Contrary to expectations Gramsci saw a potential in “Fordism” to contribute to the political emancipation of the working class. He understood that the advent of industrial specialisation would bring with it feelings of alienation in the individual worker. In addition, specialisation would destroy the old fashioned forms of labour collectivity based on craft traditions and Guild organisations. Furthermore, he accepted that the relentless demands of industrial productivity would lead to the physical and emotional exhaustion of the worker.

Gramsci’s response to this catalogue of oppression was unexpected. He embraced “Fordism” and also the scientific management of “Taylorism” as inevitable. He believed that, ultimately, these new structures would liberate workers from the oppressive relations of the past. The specialisation of the worker would require a more advanced form of technical education and a more sophisticated motivation. These would, in their turn, begin the emancipatory transformations of meritocracy. The “new rationalism” in society would, in the long term, allow individuals to see more clearly the exact conditions of their existence.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Gramsci (1891-1937) had been identified as a political radical by his selection as delegate to the Communist International in Moscow during 1922-23. After his return to Italy Gramsci was arrested, in 1926, under the “Exceptional Laws” passed by the Fascist elements in the legislature. He was placed in solitary confinement.

⁴⁷ Gramsci wrote *“America and Fordism”* in 1931.

⁴⁸ The utopian possibilities of the “new rationalism” have been explored by various authors. It is worth noting the similarities between Gramsci’s ideas and those of the Russian Alexander Bogdanov (Aleksandrovitch Malinovski 1873-1928) whose *“Red Star”* (1908) has been identified as amongst the first visions of Socialist utopia.

In the short term, Gramsci doubted that the Italian working class has sufficient discipline to engage with the physical and emotional demands of this evolutionary phase of productive capitalism and he hoped for, as Peter Wollen has described it, “a new phase of Puritanism, a kind of phase two of Weber’s Protestant ethic transferred from the bourgeoisie to the workers.”⁴⁹ Gramsci’s concern was to elaborate the circumstances and possibilities of socialist revolution in Italy. He can hardly have imagined that the circumstances that he had described in relation to the industrialisation of Italy would manifest themselves in the conditions of war in Britain.

The condition of the industrial working class in Britain would be transformed by their productive efforts in support of national survival. Furthermore, the conditions of national emergency would give a sense of urgency and of discipline to their work and would steel them to the demands of extra production. Interestingly it is possible to discern in both Gramsci and George Orwell a shared belief in the radical potential of ordinary people.⁵⁰ The circumstances of war accelerated a process that Gramsci had expected to be slow.⁵¹

In contrast, the dystopian potential of the Taylorised, managed, or supervised, workplace was itemised in Yevgeni Zamyatin’s (1884-1937) *“We”* from 1924. Zamyatin’s has proved a powerful influence on subsequent dystopian visions (see for example Huxley’s *“Brave New World”* (1932) and Orwell’s *“Nineteen Eighty Four”* (1948) and acknowledged in Newsinger (1999) and Hitchens (2002)). Zamyatin drew on his experience at the Armstrong-Whitworth shipyards at Wallsend, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, during 1916-17. This experience placed him at the centre of the British-Imperial military-industrial complex during WW1.

⁴⁹ Wollen (1993) p38.

⁵⁰ The transformation of the industrial workforce described by Gramsci played itself out in various ways. In Britain, the technical advance of the industrial workforce through organisation and discipline was matched by an embrace of middle class values. This had been accurately described by Orwell who had predicted that advances in social justice and fairness would tend to “enlarge the middle class and reinforce its social position rather than diminish or threaten it” (Orwell (1941) p51). In America the writer James Burnham described the same process from the point-of-view of the ruling elite and suggested that a new form of politics would have to emerge to serve the special interests of the newly empowered

The conditions first outlined by Benjamin now form the basis of a critical consensus and have been widely accepted in the methodology of graphic design history. Ades (1984),⁵² Jobling and Crowley (1996),⁵³ Lupton (1998)⁵⁴ and Aynsley (2000)⁵⁵ all cite Benjamin's criteria in their own analysis of the development of avant-gardist, Soviet, British and German graphic design during the 20th century. All these writers consider graphic production as an un-differentiated whole. That is, they consider books, magazines and posters as inter-related elements in the development of a progressive and Modernist visual language expressed through graphic design.⁵⁶ This ignores the technological differences between, say, book production as letterpress and poster production as lithographic process. Furthermore it ignores the widely varying availability, or distribution, of these different technologies along with the very great difference in cost of these products. The special cultural significance of posters, as a specific category of graphic design rests, suggests Timmers (1998), "on their defining characteristics of colour and scale."⁵⁷ These characteristics are entirely determined by the technologies and crafts of lithographic printing.

The major narrative, to which all the above subscribe, is that avant-garde practices in image making such as collage, montage and transformation

managerial class. Orwell and Burnham disagreed through he pages of *Polemic*, "a magazine for which Orwell wrote during the 1940s.

⁵¹ The war also accelerated the emergence of the concomitant ideas of planning, systems and information technologies. The link between these ideas and the emergence of a powerful "managerialist" interest is outlined by Burnham (1941). The evolution of the technological systems of control has been described by Beniger (1986) as part of Modernism's progress.

⁵² Ades (1984) p25 and pp22-69 for a description of the evolution of the modern poster.

⁵³ Jobling and Crowley (1996) p30.

⁵⁴ Lupton (1998) p81.

⁵⁵ Aynsley (2000) p167.

⁵⁶ Lavin (2001) p37 describes the connection between rationalised production and advertising communication as "natural" for the progressive designers of the Dutch avant-garde.

⁵⁷ Timmers (1998) p7.

were, through Moholy-Nagy and El Lissitzky's⁵⁸ examples, incorporated into a wider visual language that used the abstract and symbolic potential of integrating photographic image and typography to give graphic expression to the new social and political realities of the 1920s in Russia and Germany. Lavin (1992) claims that the techniques of photographic reproduction in printing are particularly appropriate to representations of Modern life.⁵⁹ The emphasis on the aesthetic practices of "combination, repetition and overlap" mirrored the significant routines of "time and motion."⁶⁰ The synergies between these forms of graphic expression and the political and social networks from which they originate are what make these artefacts especially worthy of study.

The key technical developments in printing that made Moholy-Nagy's concept of "typo-photo" a practical possibility were the half-tone and the process block. This was acknowledged by El Lissitzky who claimed that, "the practice of montage owed more to the technical demands of the process block than the avant-garde antecedents of cut-and-paste and montage."⁶¹ The process block became widely used during the 1920s and 30s in book and magazine production where large print runs and compact page lay outs were required. The scale of poster images required larger presses and were generally beyond the capabilities of the existing process block technology of the time.

⁵⁸ El Lissitzky (1890-1941) was a Russian architect and designer. In 1922 he designed an exhibition presenting Modernist Russia in Berlin. The exhibition design was credited with "constructing" the new Russian reality. El Lissitzky had a powerful influence on the Bauhaus school and on the design avant-garde of the 1920s and 30s.

⁵⁹ Lavin (1992) pp22-26.

⁶⁰ Lavin (1992) p7.

⁶¹ Lupton (1998) pp65-66.

The importance of technical determinants in the development of the poster design has always been acknowledged in the literature of poster history. The significance accorded to the potential of lithography to allow image and text to be combined into “a single, coherent and symbolic design” is acknowledged by Constantine (1968), Weill (1985) and Wrede (1988).⁶² Subsequent technical developments in the printing of posters have been overlooked, in the literature of poster history, in favour of the analysis of the stylistic developments in poster design.

Surprisingly, both groups within the above literature ignore any analysis of the transition, in the lithographic printing of posters, from the craft traditions of stone lithography to the half-tone based and photo-mechanical reproduction of offset photolithography. Those writers who have cited Benjamin have, whilst accepting the significance of technical determinants on design, ignored the difficulties associated with the mechanical reproduction of posters throughout the 1920s and 30s. These difficulties were mostly associated, I will argue, with the absence of adequate printing machines and half-tone technology or with the resistance of craft workers to the advent of new technologies and processes. Furthermore, the display environments for posters during the 1930s and the development of the advertising industry at that time tended to limit the production of posters; rather than promote their production. The enduring craft traditions of lithographic poster production in Britain and the control of advertising display environments have been described by Rennie (1998) who argues that these circumscribed the

⁶² See Constantine (1968) pp58-58, Weill (1985) p154 and Wrede (1988) pp23-33.

evolution of a progressive visual language, but that they contributed to the development of a sophisticated and profitable advertising industry.⁶³

The project also offers an opportunity, through an examination of the cultural contexts of the RoSPA campaign to examine the claims of radicalism attached, by George Orwell and others, to the popular experience of WW2 in Britain.

The first retrospective and major study of the popular experience of WW2 in Britain is Calder (1969). This draws heavily on material held in the Mass Observation archive at the University of Sussex. Mass Observation was an organisation established to collect political data before the widespread use of “scientific” market research techniques and “statistical” analysis. Mass Observation used volunteer “observers” to record their experiences in subjective report form. These reports were then collated into summary form for presentation in Whitehall.

McLaine (1979) has analysed the anxiety, within the Ministry of Information, about civilian morale during the war. The resulting story is one of a ministerial organisation attempting to gauge, mostly inadequately, the political temper of a civilian population it did not understand. Whilst Calder’s text reaffirmed the radical experience of war on the Home-Front in Britain, McLaine’s reminded us of an Establishment class detached, through location, class and money, from those on whose efforts it was depending. Furthermore, McLaine itemises

⁶³ Rennie (1998) p65.

a wariness and anxiety, amongst the establishment, of the progressive forces unleashed as a consequence of the war.

The progressive potential of the war in Britain has, since the end of the 1970s, come into question. Barnett (1986) presents a narrative of national decline in which the war is symbolic of economic decline and a loss of Empire. Barnett presents the consequences of war for Britain as the loss of “great power” status. Furthermore, the social and political changes, seen elsewhere as progressive, are identified by Barnett as contributing to the economic decline of Britain. It is no coincidence that this revisionism occurred at the very moment that Conservative ideologues were beginning to unpick the apparatus of post-war welfare provision and meritocracy.

The economic statistics are ambiguous and Barnett’s thesis could as easily be read as one of transformation rather than decline. The ambiguity of economic data, and the coincidence of a change in political climate, offered an opportunity for Marwick (1968 and 1976) and for Summerfield (1984) to question the temper and scale of the social changes identified by Calder (1969). This revision has continued by Rose (2003).⁶⁴ Notwithstanding this declinist revision, the RoSPA posters stand as material evidence of a radical political temper during WW2.

⁶⁴ Rose (2003) examines the Mass Observation archive to argue that English society was fractured during WW2. She finds examples of chauvinism and anti-semitism to substantiate her claim that “national unity” was a fiction. Gardiner (2004) uses memoir and diary to provide a narrative of the popular experience WW2 without claiming any radicalising potential for it. Politics and experience are therefore effectively separated.

The “Thatcherite” revision of the 1980s called into question the empowerment of ordinary people identified by Orwell, Gramsci, Hall and Calder. The recasting of popular experience as “myth” provoked a critical response from Calder (1991) who presented a detailed deconstruction of the processes by which the mythology of the wartime experience had been actively organised and managed. The successful analysis of ideological projection was further adumbrated by the work of Anderson (1991) who identified the “imagined community” as the target of such projection.

Subsequent analysis by Saler (1999) and Colls (2001) has focussed on the geographic and regional parameters of the “imagined communities” that have sustained utopian Modernism in Britain since 1918. The Nonconformist and northern indices of these projections are confirmed within the RoSPA campaign.

The RoSPA posters may therefore be taken to reaffirm the radical potential of the popular experience of the Home-Front during WW2. The successful projection of this radicalism, through graphic design and mechanical reproduction, confirms Benjamin’s thesis within the unlikely context of Britain at war. The origin of the campaign within Nonconformist and utopian socialism confirms the progressive character of the campaign and positively supports Benjamin’s arguments.

These are the material and theoretical starting points for the thesis.

The Thesis

The project is divided into two main parts of roughly equal length.

Part One looks at RoSPA and traces the evolutionary narrative of RoSPA's activities before and during WW2. This narrative is presented in relation to the organisation of RoSPA, the personalities behind its production of Industrial Safety posters and also by reference to the printing technologies of mechanical reproduction. Part One is divided into three main sections.

Section One begins by tracing the origins of RoSPA as an organisation created to address the public safety issues of increased car ownership. Section Two examines the beginnings of RoSPA's engagement with industrial safety. Section Three provides an account of RoSPA's Industrial Safety campaign during WW2.

Part One, Section One, outlines the origins of RoSPA as an organisation focused primarily on road safety. The alignment of RoSPA's predecessors with the interests of road transport users is reflected in their ambivalent attempts at promoting industrial safety before 1939. This is in marked contrast with their mobilisation of sophisticated design to promote road safety during the later 1930s.

Part One, Section Two, examines the relationship between RoSPA and design. The possible antecedents of RoSPA's Industrial Safety campaign

are itemised. The personalities behind the dynamic evolution, through design, of the RoSPA campaign are introduced. Ernest Bevin's role in the wartime development of the RoSPA campaign is described along with its alignment with Bevin's post-war welfarist objectives. Bevin's friendship with Frank Pick is presented as indicative of the association of design with progressive social values drawn from their shared Nonconformist backgrounds. Bevin's appropriation of the RoSPA campaign serves his greater political vision. The RoSPA campaign therefore qualifies as a significant precedent in the projection of humane social values through graphic design. The success of this projection is counted a small contribution to the progressive and reforming political climate after WW2.

The use of mechanical reproduction and Modernist graphic design within the RoSPA campaign is accounted for by reference to the Publicity Committee of RoSPA. The presence of Ashley Havinden and Francis Meynell on the Publicity Committee is presented as crucial in distinguishing the RoSPA campaign from other forms of graphic propaganda during wartime. The RoSPA posters are further distinguished from the prevailing styles of poster design in Britain before WW2. Finally, the roster of RoSPA designers is introduced. Chief amongst them are Tom Eckersley and a group of émigré designers hitherto overlooked by the Ministry of Information.

Part One Section Three describes the technological determinants of the RoSPA campaign by reference to the Sheffield printing firm of Loxley Brothers. The Nonconformist origins of Loxley Brothers are described

along with their development within the Sheffield and Yorkshire economies. The relationship with RoSPA is detailed and the processes of printing posters by mechanical reproduction and photolithography are described. The mechanical evolution of printing presses is introduced as a crucial determinant in the RoSPA campaign. Finally, a brief mention is made of Loxley Brothers role in the distribution of RoSPA material.

Part Two examines the cultural contexts of the RoSPA campaign. These are addressed through three main links. The first is with RoSPA's audience and this is looked at by reference to gender, Surrealism and the developing iconography of Left politics within the RoSPA campaign. The second is with a version of English Modernism that is presented as uniquely configured by reference to community, Nonconformism and the north. Lastly, the idea of graphic authorship is described in the context of a progressive cultural projection that speaks of reconstruction and welfare in Britain.

These sections of the thesis attempt to step back from the RoSPA posters and to ask what the RoSPA posters can tell us about the special characteristics of English Modernism during WW2 and to ask what significance the technological transformations that occurred during WW2 had on the concept and practice of graphic authorship after WW2. Neither of these sections attempts anything more than a partial answer to these more speculative considerations.

The RoSPA campaign is identified as proactive in its engagement, through graphic design, with the successful communication of a progressive politics to a wider audience. The RoSPA posters therefore correspond exactly to the hopes, expressed by Walter Benjamin, for a socially progressive, politically engaged and mass-produced form of graphic communication. They are amongst the first to do this anywhere in the world. The Modernist credentials of the RoSPA campaign disabuse two powerful orthodoxies – that Modernism was resisted and rejected in England and that war propaganda marked a retreat to the banal and literal in terms of visual communications.

The progressive values implicit within the campaign are exemplified in the friendship at the heart of the RoSPA campaign between Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour, and Frank Pick, former Chief Executive of London Transport and guiding intelligence in the use of design as a “civilising agency.”⁶⁵ Bullock (1960) has noted that “the contribution of Nonconformity to the British labour movement is a commonplace...it fostered a strong sense of duty and conscience and self-respect.”⁶⁶ Notwithstanding the political connections described by Bullock, those between the nascent design establishment and Nonconformist values remain much more ambiguous.⁶⁷ The RoSPA campaign and its contexts provide evidence of this little known alignment of values.

⁶⁵ Quoted in Saler (1999) p34.

⁶⁶ Bullock (1960) pp8-9.

⁶⁷ Raistrick (1993) provides the narrative of the Quaker contribution to science and industry in Britain. The sect, founded by George Fox in the 1650s, placed equal emphasis on the equality of men before God and of individual modesty amongst its members. The social marginalisation of the early sect forced them into new kinds of economic activity. The Quaker members were pioneers of the nascent studies in metallurgy during the early 18th century. In consequence they were well placed to enter the printing industry and to supply industrial machinery to the industrial workshops of northern Britain. These connections

Bevin recognised that the productive drive that would support the military objectives of the war could not be possible until capital, plant and personnel had been matched. The RoSPA posters begin to appear at the end of 1940 and coincide, almost exactly, with the publication of George Orwell's polemical essay "*The Lion and the Unicorn*"⁶⁸ and of "*Picture Post's*" special issue "*A Plan for Britain*" of January 1941.⁶⁹

The significance of "*Picture Post*" should not be underestimated. Hall (1971) has called it, "a significant departure in British commercial journalism."⁷⁰ Hall identifies the significance of the project in the radical combination of "documentary and social-realism"⁷¹ and in the fact that, "it mobilised the country behind ideas that outran the definitions provided by those in power."⁷² Both the RoSPA posters and "*Picture Post*" are a manifestation of political ideas, projected through design, that moved the political debate away from the terms set out by the existing political establishment. This moment, says Hall, was characterised by a, "combining of native genius with 'bloody' foreigners."⁷³ It was a remarkable and unlikely conjuncture for both "*Picture Post*" and RoSPA

inform the relations between Loxley Brothers in Sheffield and their colleagues in York and Leeds. These relations are outlined in the central part of this thesis.

⁶⁸ Orwell's essay was published by Secker and Warburg as part of their "*Searchlight*" series in early 1941. See Newsinger (1999) pp70-77.

⁶⁹ "*A Plan for Britain*" was published as the January 4th issue of "*Picture Post*". The debates and controversy that it provoked continued throughout the year.

⁷⁰ Hall (1971) p140.

⁷¹ Hall (1971) p142.

⁷² Hall (1971) p143.

⁷³ Hall (1971) p143.

and marked the “high point of a Social-Democratic project that lasted until the late 1950s.”⁷⁴

The progressive characteristics of “War Socialism” are accounted for, in their English context, by reference to the Nonconformist and north-country antecedents of the RoSPA campaign and identified by Colls (2002) and Saler (1999) as distinguishing characteristics of English Modernism and of a projection of national identity beyond the normal limits of class structure and party-politics.⁷⁵

Taylor (2001) has identified a set of similar characteristics that, he suggests, constitute a specifically northern geo-identity.⁷⁶ These are, he argues, normally subsumed within the overpowering rhetoric of English national identity and, are in consequence, politically neutralised. It would be wrong to characterise the RoSPA campaign as merely regionalist in its appeal to the north. Taylor concludes that this emerging geo-identity is distinguished by the radical potential implicit in its characteristics.⁷⁷ These are precisely the characteristics, as stated above, that distinguish the RoSPA campaign.

A catalogue of the WW2 RoSPA posters is presented as Appendix One.

The catalogue is indexed by designer and by subject.

⁷⁴ “*Picture Post*” closed in 1957. The coincidence of “*Picture Post*” as radical publishing venture and of the RoSPA campaign at its most inventive and sophisticated is startling.

⁷⁵ See Colls (2002) pp108-123 and Saler (1999) pp44-53.

⁷⁶ Taylor (2001) p132.

⁷⁷ Taylor (2001) p139.

Literature Review

The literature review and historiography that follows is an attempt to outline the existing strands of poster history from which the story of the RoSPA posters may be drawn out. The RoSPA campaign is distinguished from other types of propaganda in the USA and in Britain.

The technological developments in printing that precede the RoSPA posters are described and connected to a project of cultural *mythologizing* that attempts to cement a society seen in flux and under threat. The project is described in relation to the emergence of "*Picture Post*" magazine and linked to Orwell's thesis of social transformation.

Finally, the role and status of graphic authorship is considered in relation to these interventions.

The themes and methodology of this thesis draw heavily on Stuart Hall's analysis of "*Picture Post*." Hall (1972) examines the unlikely conjuncture of politics, technology and social values made possible by the circumstances of war, the influx of foreign design professionals and of social and community values drawn from northern, industrial England.

Rennie (1999) has tested some of these ideas and connections in the different context of 1920s Berlin. The production of film posters in this period is linked to the emerging technologies of cinema and offset lithography and also to the projection of Berlin as a particularly Modern metropolis. In the context of post WW1 reconstruction these themes are presented as especially significant. The success of this project allowed for the more ambitious scope of this thesis to be undertaken.

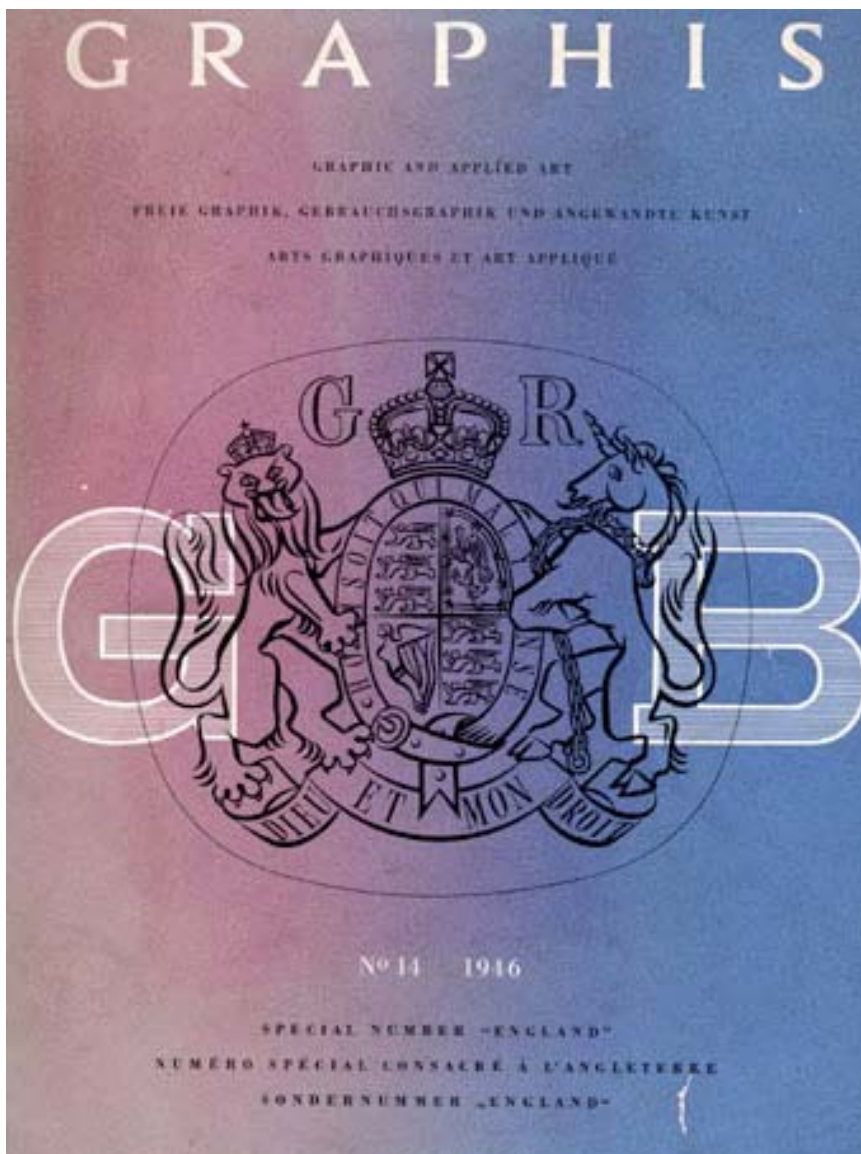


Figure 7. Cover of "Graphis Number 14" by Milner Gray
1946
Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

RoSPA Posters

The RoSPA posters are reproduced in the specialist graphic design press from 1946 onwards. There is no wartime literature about the RoSPA posters.⁷⁸

The first published account of the RoSPA campaign appears in Noel Carrington (1946) as part of his *“British Poster Art During the War”* published by *“Graphis”* magazine in Switzerland.⁷⁹ This is a general survey of poster design and production covering every aspect of production during WW2. A small selection of RoSPA posters is included as illustrations. The posters do not receive any specific mention in the text. In 1950 the German graphics magazine *“Gebrauchsgraphik”* was republished after an interregnum period and its second issue of that year included the article *“Warning Signs - English Prevention of Accidents Posters”*⁸⁰ by Eberhard Hölscher. Neither of these articles is anything more than a brief illustrated account of some of the posters produced. Carrington’s text is primarily concerned with the tradition and background of the English poster scene and its wartime concern of creating the right mood amongst the population. This he distinguished from other types of propaganda, created elsewhere during the conflict. He drew the

⁷⁸ Mass Observation (1942) p207 refers to the circumstances that the RoSPA posters address.

⁷⁹ *“Graphis,”* Number 14 (1946), pp172-185. See also figure 7 (p48).

⁸⁰ *“Gebrauchsgraphik,”* (1950) no2, pp33-41 translated by Flora Salmond Volkmann. The magazine had been the most important international graphics magazine before WW2.

conclusion, from the evidence of the posters, that the British public were not necessarily hostile to “Modernist treatments or surreal humour.”⁸¹

The accident prevention posters were also featured in the various annual collections of poster design, gathered from around the world that were published after WW2. The best known of these was “*Modern Publicity*”⁸² from The Studio Ltd, publishers of “*Art & Industry*.”⁸³ Because of wartime restrictions only four volumes of these collections were published between 1939 and 1951. The 1940s can therefore appear as a “lost” decade in poster history. The RoSPA posters emerge during a period when the bibliography of poster design was at its most restricted. The RoSPA posters are included in “*Modern Publicity*” from about 1949 onwards. The pages of “*Modern Publicity*” introduced the RoSPA posters to an international audience.⁸⁴

The propaganda images of WW2 did not receive the critical attention that the posters of the 1930s, for example, received. By the time that a critical response to the graphic design of the 1940s became possible British advertising art had moved on as part-and-parcel of the economic activities of post-war reconstruction and national export drive. The RoSPA posters, along with much WW2 propaganda therefore disappeared from view or became marginalised in relation to other forms of war propaganda.

⁸¹ “*Graphis*,” Number 14, p176.

⁸² See Mercer and Gaunt (1949) (1950) and (1951) for example.

⁸³ “*Art and Industry*” was a monthly magazine devoted to industrial and graphic design.

⁸⁴ Mercer and Gaunt (1939) p115 shows three Polish posters that address injury and workplace themes. It is not clear what circumstances occasioned these posters and whether they were ever published.

"The International Poster Annual" (IPA) was first published in 1949 by Zollikofer of St Gall in Switzerland and under the technical direction of the renowned poster artist A M Cassandre. The English section in this survey, introduced by Jack Beddington, makes reference and illustrates several examples from the RoSPA campaign.⁸⁵ Beddington's introductory remarks emphasise the point that the continued shortage of materials in Britain had brought the evolution of design to a standstill. So much so that he states "posters today (1949) differ very little from those of 1938."⁸⁶ Beddington was perhaps expressing a view, based on the superficial appearance of the posters, that the English had not kept up with the European and American rivals in the pursuit of a thoroughly Modern aesthetic for the visual language of marketing and publicity. He must have realised, as the former creative director at Shell-Mex & BP Ltd, how completely the design and printing environments had been changed during the 1940's. The posters Beddington picks out were all, in fact, significantly different from those produced during the 1930s. At a technical level these differences include the printing by processes of photo-mechanical reproduction. The more widespread use of photography as an element in design would also be evident at this period.

The 1951 edition of the IPA there is a brief explanation of the background to the RoSPA posters written by Sidney A Grummitt, production manager to RoSPA.⁸⁷ It is interesting that even in 1951, six years after the end of

⁸⁵ Allner (1949) p39.

⁸⁶ Allner (1949) p40.

⁸⁷ Allner (1951) pp10-11.

⁸⁷ Peter Ray (1947) pp31-33.

WW2, the posters of RoSPA are still the only such posters in the world. Certainly they feature in the IPA on that basis. Also, as Grummitt makes clear the constraints on design and production are, “considerable by virtue of RoSPA’s limited budgets.”

Selections of RoSPA posters are also included in the British design annual “*Designers in Britain*” from its first issue in 1947.⁸⁸ The examples of commercial art, in which the RoSPA posters feature, were again selected by Jack Beddington. Another co-incidence is that the 1940s address of the Society of Industrial Artists is listed in Bedford Square, London, and that they were neighbours of the printers Lund Humphries, who, since the early 1930s, had used their office premises in London to promote the value of good design. Ashley Havinden and Edward McKnight Kauffer would certainly have been aware of the proximity of these offices. This address features as an important element in the networks of designers and printers that underpinned the production of RoSPA posters. It is interesting that the firm and its address retained their significance.

“*Designers in Britain*” was conceived as a showcase for good British design and was published at two-yearly intervals from 1947 onwards. The sponsorship of the Society of Industrial Designers suggests that it was aimed at promoting the work of the Society's membership. It was a post-war competitor publication to “*Modern Publicity*” (which had been published by “*The Studio*” since the early 1920s). Interestingly, the first

issue of "*Designers in Britain*" includes a London Transport safety poster. This is not part of the RoSPA campaign although clearly related to it. The illustration of this material is unsupported by any editorial comment apart from the listing of designer, printer and publisher.

The subject of safety posters is raised within "*Design*" magazine from 1955 onwards.⁸⁹ The magazine was the official publication of the Council of Industrial Design (CoID), successor organisation to the Design and Industries Association and forerunner of the Design Council. In August 1955 Peter Sieber wrote, "*Waste on the Roads*" (an analysis of the road safety campaigns of RoSPA).⁹⁰ This brief text is illustrated with several examples of the posters and shows a group of posters presented on roadside displays.

In the November 1958 issue of "*Design*" (number 119) B Shakel wrote "*Design Investigation - Accidents with Machines*" as an appeal that the design of machine tools should, as a matter of principle, concern itself with safety as well as ergonomic factors. Reference is made to the RoSPA posters and the cost to British industry of workplace accidents.⁹¹

In October 1960 L Bruce Archer asked, "*Do Posters Work?*" A question that he attempted to answer using an analysis of three specifically designed safety posters by Eric Ayers for display within a steel factory.⁹²

The experiment was carried out under the auspices of the British Iron

⁸⁹ "*Design*" was published monthly by the CoID.

⁹⁰ "*Design*" No 80, August 1955, pp32-34.

⁹¹ "*Design*" No 119, November 1958, pp29-35.

⁹² "*Design*" No 142, October 1960, pp52-53. See also Archer (1965) and Rayner (1965) for the emerging discussion of ergonomic factors in industrial safety and home safety.

and Steel Federation Research Association and was set up to measure the effectiveness of posters in reducing the frequency of a particular accident. It was found that the posters were effective, but that their effectiveness was not so much a function of the style or design of the poster as a consequence of the creation of a “mood of responsibility within the workplace.” Indeed, the paper warns against graphic designers thinking that exciting design is sufficient to attract attention and modify behaviour. The equivocal findings of this experiment are in sharp contrast to the success of the wartime RoSPA campaign.

Darracott and Loftus (1972) mention the RoSPA posters within the context of a survey of WW2 posters drawn from the Imperial War Museum’s collection. Ironically, only one RoSPA poster is shown and it is for a road safety blackout campaign.⁹³

It should be noted that there also exists a technical literature on industrial safety focussing on the understanding of accident data for policy professionals. Bartrip (1990) has examined the history of the development of safety inspection and reporting through the Victorian and Edwardian period of rapid expansion in industrialization. Bartrip traces the changing perceptions of accidents in relation to the reporting organisation and suggests that the problem of industrial accidents is both “practical and socially constructed.”

⁹³ Darracott and Loftus (1972) p44 reproduce a blackout poster by G R Morris. The caption notes that the RoSPA campaign was recognised, by the designers F H K Henrion and Abram Games as, “producing some of the best posters of the war.”

The Factories Act of 1844 marks the beginning of available statistical data for industrial accidents. A very significant rise in the number of reported accidents occurs at the end of the 19th century when the inspectorate is expanded to reflect the very much larger industrial infrastructure of the time. Bartrip suggests that within the context of these changing parameters it is impossible to make sense of the available statistical data except to report the influence of reporting on attitudes amongst rule makers, enforcers and rule breakers. The idea that the perception of industrial accidents is a complex reaction to the realities of the work place and to the social ideals of welfare at work indicates that the RoSPA campaign was conceived to work on several levels.

The circumstances of national emergency, under which the RoSPA campaign flourished, simply underline the significance of the socially orientated aspects of their campaign. It is worth noting that these elements probably remained outside the control of the RoSPA organisation.

It is worth noting that, in France and Poland, the circumstances of national reconstruction provided a context for increased industrial safety awareness.⁹⁴

⁹⁴ See for example France (1949) for examples of safety posters for carpenters and building site workers. Also noted in Lelieur (2004) p388 and Szemberg (1955) p40.

RoSPA and Tom Eckersley

The earliest reference to Tom Eckersley's graphic work is "*What Made the Umbrella Weep, Mr Eckersley?*" by Mary Gowing (1947).⁹⁵ This text is, however slight, the first instance of a reflective approach to Eckersley's poster work. Gowing reveals an appreciation of the value of humour in communicating with the public - particularly in relation to the efforts, made during WW2, to provoke a change in behaviour.

Humour in British graphic design has been comprehensively discussed in "*A Smile in the Mind*" by Beryl McAlhone and David Stuart (1996).⁹⁶ Their conclusion, supported by explanation and illustrations, is that wit in graphic design is a peculiarly effective way of building relationships through the shared processes of decoding.⁹⁷ The space for humour in effective graphic communication was opened up, in Britain, partly by the appropriation of Surrealist techniques of transformation and juxtaposition. This appropriation was only possible in a context where the more formalist tendencies of the avant-garde had been rejected in favour of more emotional expression.

Interestingly, those writers that have examined the visual rhetoric of either propaganda or Modernism have ignored the potential possibilities

⁹⁵ Gowing (1947) included in "*Art and Industry*," January 1947 pp2-7. Mary Gowing was an assistant to Hans Schleger and went on to become one of the most important women in British Advertising during the late 1950s and 1960s. See also Hollis (1997).

⁹⁶ McAlhone and Stuart (1996) pp18-23.

⁹⁷ MacAlhone and Stuart (1996) identify wit as a significant source of added value in effective communications. Their survey focuses in the contemporary design scene in London and New York during the 1990s. They describe wit as, "a characteristic of the sophisticated and highly developed visual language of commercial graphic design." They list "transformations, substitutions, additions and modifications" as especially effective. The only posters from WW2 shown are by Abram Games, Henrion and Fougasse.

of humour. Within, say, the context of Dawn Ades' *"Design of the Avant Garde"* (1984) there is no reference to the progressive impact that the judicious use of humour might have made within the development of European Modernism - from Soviet Constructivism through to Abstraction. In part, of course, this is a reflection of the revolutionary seriousness that was the wellspring of the images that she discusses and of the formalism at the heart of the Modernist project. But this also reflects on a doctrinaire tendency that has been a characteristic of Modernist culture in the mid 20th century.



Figure 8. USA WW2 factory poster

"Take Care

Idle Hands Work for Hitler"

1942

Smithsonian Institution USA

Propaganda Posters in WW2

The RoSPA posters are little known today. They are overlooked in the literature of war propaganda that has tended to concentrate on general histories of the genre and on comparative studies of the various approaches to similar subjects within the opposing powers. Paret, Paret and Lewis (1992), for example, present a selection of propaganda posters from the Hoover Institution Archives.⁹⁸ Within their project British Home-Front propaganda of WW2 merits only two pages and illustrates only four posters. Even in Rhodes (1976), which sets out to establish a visual record of both allied and axis propaganda during WW2, there is no mention of the RoSPA posters.⁹⁹ Indeed, Rhodes takes his material entirely from the Ministry of Information and from Abram Games. No safety posters appear within the other selections offered in this record.

In the Victoria and Albert Museum's *"Power of the Poster"* exhibition catalogue from 1998 David Crowley has written of British Home-Front propaganda of WW2 in terms that distinguish it from its historical antecedents and the propaganda messages of other regimes; typically those of the German and Soviet regimes. These, he suggests, "used threats and fear rather than information, promises and rational appeal to address their audiences."¹⁰⁰ Crowley claims that the British Home-Front posters effectively "naturalised"¹⁰¹ the war effort with the claim that the

⁹⁸ Paret, Paret and Lewis (1992) pp182-191.

⁹⁹ Rhodes (1976) pp122-136.

¹⁰⁰ David Crowley *"Protest and Propaganda"* in Timmers (1998) p124.

¹⁰¹ Crowley does not specifically cite Gramsci although the term is presented in inverted commas.



Figure 9. USA WW2 safety poster
*"Home Safety is Front-Line Defence
Conserve
Protect"*

1942

New York Works Progress Administration War Services
Smithsonian Institution USA

war was being fought with the democratic consensus of the people.¹⁰² Crowley continues that this form of propaganda, with its promises of a better future, “constitutes a de facto contract between the state and the people.”¹⁰³ The RoSPA posters merit a passing reference within the context of this claim but remain unexamined. In fact, the RoSPA posters are an early example of this changing relationship between labour and capital. The RoSPA posters therefore offer a unique opportunity to examine this claim in detail and to look at the beginnings of a British pictorial discourse that is progressive in its political engagement and Modernist in the graphic style of its presentation.

The subject matter and style of the RoSPA posters immediately distinguish the campaign from the bulk of propaganda material produced in Britain during WW2 and by the other combatant nations. It is worth emphasising, from the start, that every country produced industrial propaganda to support the production efforts of the Home-Front. No other combatant nation produced a co-ordinated campaign of poster images and supporting material with the primary message of workshop safety as part of worker welfare. The industrial propaganda produced in the USA, for example, is almost exclusively directed at boosting output and of positioning the productive worker as a heroic member of the war effort. This is reflected in the selections of Bird and Rubenstein (1998) where the catalogue includes just two safety posters - one aimed at

¹⁰² Crowley in Timmers (1998) p125.

¹⁰³ Whilst the generalisations of Crowley’s arguments are mostly correct it would be wrong to think of Soviet and German propaganda as necessarily simplistic in its appeal to more visceral values. The Soviet propaganda of WW2 used the projection of a better and autonomous future to effectively demonise the German enemy. This campaign was underscored by reference to German atrocities. The use of these parallel campaigns reveals some sophistication in propaganda management.

home safety and the second at road safety.¹⁰⁴ In both cases the potential accident is identified as diverting resources and helping the enemy - a theme that remains implicit in the RoSPA poster images.

The United States industrial propaganda of WW2 was characterised by its insistence on the role of worker as productive agent and the association of any negativity with a form of support for the enemy. Figures 8 (p58) and 9 (p60) reproduce examples of this genre. Similar posters were, of course, produced in Britain whereas, in America, there were no RoSPA style messages directed at welfare.

Even when American propagandists addressed issues of social justice, racial equality and the emancipatory potential of education, they did so through the embrace of capital rather than community. The American context seems to have regarded worker welfare as best served by industrial progress and higher output resulting in higher wages. These concerns were the subject of a series of poster designs produced and circulated by Mather, printers in Chicago (see figures 28 and 29 pages 138 and 140). Mather posters are a rare antecedent of pictorial communication in the industrial workplace - their values, however, are very different from those of RoSPA. The very existence of the RoSPA campaign therefore tells us something about the social values and political realities of Britain at war. Furthermore, the RoSPA posters offer a powerful contrast to their American counterparts.

¹⁰⁴ Bird and Rubenstein (1998) p18.

One of Bird and Rubenstein's most interesting suggestions is that WW2 provided, in North America, a particular opportunity, perhaps because of the context of national emergency and the short-lived absence of capitalist competitiveness, for the potential rhetoric of post-war design and advertising to be established. This conflict would see the cultural interest of Barr and MoMA ranged against those of Madison Avenue.¹⁰⁵ The battle stepped up with the entry of the US into the war and the graphic presentation of US war aims became also a battle for competing business, corporate and political agendas.¹⁰⁶

One of the recurring difficulties of poster history is that the images survive without any supporting material to account for their production. The firms that printed the posters have often disappeared whilst those that commissioned them have generally failed to maintain a record of the process by which the posters were commissioned. This is a reflection of the relatively short chain-of-command that characterised the commissioning of poster material before 1939 and of the ad-hoc nature of much commercial production of the time. It is only with the advent of war and the beginning of Government purchasing of design that the possibilities for supporting documentation begin to appear.

The RoSPA posters are therefore unusual in that the poster materials are supported by an archive of organisational information relating to the specific objectives and circumstances of their activities. In addition we

¹⁰⁵ Madison Avenue, in New York, had become the address associated with the advertising industry.

¹⁰⁶ Bird and Rubenstein (1990) p98.

should acknowledge that the RoSPA posters have the special quality of focus - in both their themes and in their address. In consequence the RoSPA posters offer the possibility of looking in detail at the ideas, motives and realisation of propaganda beyond the accepted limits of propaganda as necessarily “aggressive, masculine and nationalistic in its values.”¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Angela Weight, of the Imperial War Museum, London, quoted considering the contemporary distaste for propaganda and reviewing Bird and Rubenstein (1990) in *Print Quarterly*, Volume XVI, number 3, p302.

The Ministry of Information and Official Propagandas

Within the context of British war propaganda the RoSPA campaign needs to be distinguished from the other main forms of poster propaganda made during the war. The largest group of posters was produced by the Ministry of Information and directed at maintaining morale and informing the Home-Front population. The Ministry created a wide variety of images on various themes and printed the posters in large number for national distribution. In addition the Ministry produced films and written material to support the war.

There have been several attempts to examine the propaganda efforts of Britain during WW2. The most important of these are McLean (1979) and Balfour (1979). Neither of these texts examines the poster production of MOI in any detail – merely reproducing various examples of printed posters, pamphlets and posters as formal archetypes of propaganda production.

McLean's *"Ministry of Morale"* looks at the concept of morale as a measurable feature of the discourse between Government and people. In consequence his analysis is very much one of how morale came to be configured, through class prejudices, as a defining characteristic of the success of propaganda and of how, with the help of Mass Observation, it

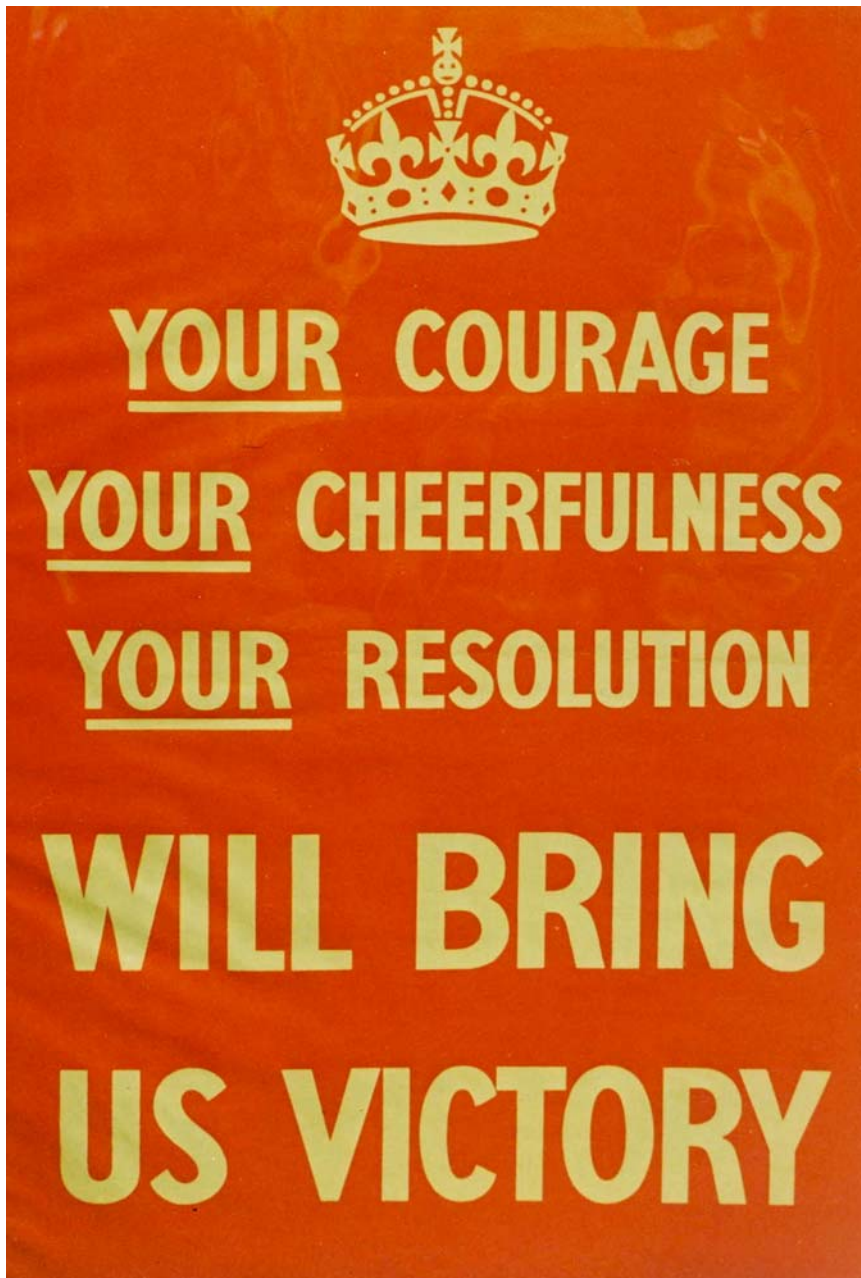


Figure 10. Ministry of Information Home-Front poster

"Your Courage Your Cheerfulness Your Resolution

Will Bring Us Victory"

1939

Imperial War Museum

came to be measured.¹⁰⁸ Balfour's *"Propaganda"* examines the genesis of the propaganda ministries in Germany and Britain and seeks to contrast the national and ideological characteristics of the two approaches. Balfour had been a member of the MOI during WW2 and presents the considerations of propaganda as an abstract political concept rather than by appeal to concrete evidence.

The archives of the Ministry are held at the Public Record Office, Kew. A brief overview of the Ministry's printed output can be gained from *"Persuading the People"*¹⁰⁹ and *"Images of War."*¹¹⁰ These modest surveys present a wide variety of the printed material produced by the Ministry with only the briefest supporting text and with hardly any information about the production processes that the Ministry mobilised for its work. Both these surveys examine posters within the context of a wide range of printed ephemera.

The Ministry's poster output has not been considered one of its strengths - relative to, say, its film-making or broadcasting activities. Indeed, the bibliography addressing both the literary and film output of the Ministry

¹⁰⁸ Mass Observation (MO) was conceived as a means of collecting personal testimony and opinion as an alternative to statistical data and for presentation to the political establishment. The subjective basis of this information rendered this data suspect within the context of wartime and post-war planning. More recently the focus-group has been used to identify popular political opinion. MO was established by Tom Harrisson, Charles Madge and Humphrey Jennings in 1933.

¹⁰⁹ Osley (1995) is a brief guide to the printed ephemera of the Ministry of Information during WW2.

¹¹⁰ Cantwell (1989) provides an illustrated selection of Home-Front posters by the Ministry of Information. There is brief introductory text that outlines the major military and social themes of WW2.

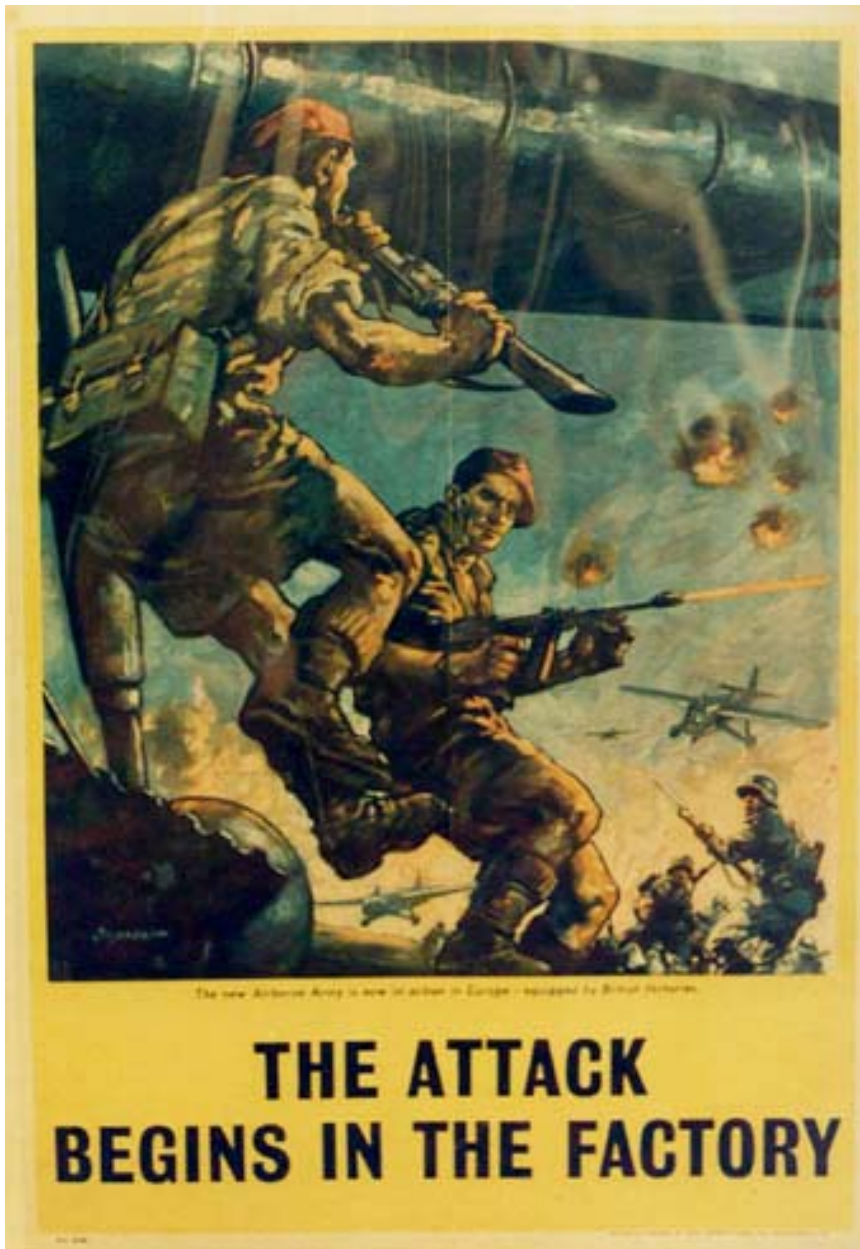


Figure 11. Ministry of Information factory poster

"The Attack Begins in the Factory"

1943

Imperial War Museum

far exceed that concerned with its poster output. In simple terms this bibliographic shortfall reflects the highly developed and theorised worlds of film studies and of the critical discourses attached to cinema and literature. As yet, the history of graphic design has not attracted the same volume of interest or developed as wide ranging a set of critical tools.

The Ministry favoured a style of commercial art for its poster designs that was a reflection of the rather conservative tastes of the commercial advertising men that were responsible to the Ministry for the duration. The MOI posters are distinguished, in contrast to the RoSPA campaign, by the absence of a coherent design aesthetic and by a reluctance to connect wartime messages to a political reality beyond war. The limitations of the Ministry's design sense can be seen in the faltering start they made through the first poster of the war which addressed the public with a text only message, *"Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution Will bring Us Victory."* The poster is reproduced as figure 10 (p66).

"The Times" newspaper, commenting on this first propaganda poster of WW2, found the insipid and patronising tone of this message "uniquely exasperating" and wondered if it was, in fact, "what the public needed."¹¹¹ A similar view was expressed by R B Fishenden, Editor of the *"Penrose Annual"* who wrote that, "in this war, the Government, instead of giving a lead to the right use of design in propaganda, has been reactionary, and

¹¹¹ Quoted in McLaine (1979) p31.



Figure 12. Ministry of Information factory poster

"Women of Britain

Arm Him"

1943

Imperial War Museum

for the time being we are oppressed by a mental as well as a physical blackout.”¹¹²

It is not entirely surprising that, in response to these criticisms of its first poster, the Ministry of Information sent Richard Crossman to recruit the cartoonist David Low. It appealed to him to produce illustrations for posters and leaflets. Low refused, judging the likely products of the Ministry, as late as 1939, “inept and futile.”¹¹³ The appeal to humour, explicit in the attempt to recruit Low, was a typically British solution to the problem of striking the right tone.

Nikolaus Pevsner had identified the potential for humour to open a space, within the established visual language of mass media, as early as 1936. In a brief article entitled “*The Psychology of English and German Posters*” included in the “*Penrose Annual*” of that year Pevsner drew attention to the relative sophistication of British advertising and the use, within it, of the pun or joke to both draw attention and to allude to another world. Pevsner recognised that the comical poster was rare in Germany and that in Britain it was, especially common form of the British mass-market poster.” Its appeal was based on a sense of fun. This, Pevsner thought, distinguished it from all other European variants and was, he suggested, an important means of opening up the visual language of advertising to speaking successfully of ideas. Pevsner concluded that

¹¹² An annual survey of critical and technical developments in the graphic arts and printing.

¹¹³ McLaine (1979) p31.



Figure 13. Ministry of Information factory poster

"The Navy Thanks You"

1943

Ian Grush Collection USA

German posters had a directness of appeal that he thought almost painful to the English who, he suggested, “liked to see on their posters the charms of their country or an amusing or cleverly worded joke.”

There was also the tendency, described by “Fougasse” (Kenneth Bird), to achieve an effective design by not concentrating of the horrific consequences of accident and war. “Fougasse” rightly considered that, outside a totalitarian environment, the designer was reliant on goodwill for the effective display of poster material and that the goodwill, being a part of business, was more likely to be well disposed to humorous images. “What” he asks “is the difference between humorous propaganda and realistic propaganda? The function of realistic propaganda is to stop you putting your hand in a circular saw by shewing you just what happens when you do so; the function of humorous propaganda, on the other hand, is to correct, by implication, the state of mind that prompts you to put your hand there at all. Realism states a fact - humour, with its naturally wider net says - if you behave like this, it leads to that.”¹¹⁴

The opportunity to address a difficult theme obliquely was central to the RoSPA project. Lord McGowan, President of RoSPA, recognised this when he declared that, “a smile will often get far more done than a threat or scowl.”¹¹⁵ Not only did these statements endorse an approach to

¹¹⁴ Bird (1946) pp33-38. Bird had been involved, as early as 1935, with the early propagandising of road safety issues as a consequence of the Road Traffic Bill (1929). See Bird (1935). Road safety was RoSPA’s primary concern before WW2.

¹¹⁵ Address to the membership 1940. Recorded in “*Report to National Executive Committee*,” 1941. RoSPA Archive, National Executive Committee papers (D.266/2/8).



Figure 14. War Office military safety poster by Abram Games

"This Child Found a Blind"

1943

Imperial War Museum

communication they declared a sensitivity to worker sensibilities and a recognition of what was likely to achieve results.¹¹⁶ The RoSPA campaign exemplifies this reluctance to harangue the workforce. Within the context of national survival this sensitivity is remarkable. “Fougasse” went further arguing that where the realistic necessarily means the horrific the advantages of humour are considerable, “for anything unpleasant naturally causes an automatic closing of the mind against it.”¹¹⁷ RoSPA endorsed this strategy.

Figures 10 to 13 (pages 66, 68, 70 and 72) illustrate a selection of posters produced by the Ministry of Information. The beginnings of their propaganda efforts were muddled. Their first poster was roundly condemned for its insistent use of “us and them” rhetoric and for its use of the crown as symbol of national communication. The poster draws to mind a form of proclamation that was antiquated even in 1939. The quality of design improved quickly but the themes of their propaganda efforts gave limited scope for the kinds of visual inventiveness that characterise the RoSPA campaign. Figures 11 to 13 (pages 68, 70 and 72) make the association between production and the front line explicit.

¹¹⁶ McAlhone and Stuart (1996) pp16-19 have identified the familiar and the play as the distinguishing characteristics of witty design. Furthermore, the use of wit or humour implies a strategy of decoding and active participation on the part of the viewer. The relationships between design and its audiences are therefore participatory and consensual rather than imperative.

¹¹⁷ Bird (1946) p38.



Figure 15. War Office military safety poster by Abram Games

"Look First

Prevent Accidents"

1943

Imperial War Museum

It is worth remarking on the poster reproduced as figure 12 (p 70) with its address to a female audience and its use of grotesque characterisation in the figure of the German soldier.¹¹⁸

In contrast to the MOI, the posters of the War Office are uniformly coherent and of powerful design. The charge of uncertainty could not be levelled at Abram Games - a young poster designer who was appointed by the War Office as Official Poster Designer.¹¹⁹ His was a military posting and Games posters became part of the background in every military establishment in Britain. Games was helped during his time at the War Office by the veteran poster designer Frank Newbould. Games developed a highly stylised visual language for communication in a military context. Games has described his approach to designing posters as based on "maximum meaning, minimum means."¹²⁰ The process by which his work developed was described by Games as, "a relentless application of hard work and sincerity toward the perfect integration of image, text and meaning."¹²¹ The use of the word sincerity is especially telling within the context of propaganda and political communications that have generally been associated with lies, dishonesty and half-truths.¹²²

The propaganda posters designed by Abram Games and reproduced as figures 14, 15 and 16 (pages 74, 76 and 78) exemplify his direct and

¹¹⁸ The explicit depiction of the German monster was a characteristic of Soviet WW2 propaganda. The images of the stencilled "*Tass posters*" are often especially graphic.

¹¹⁹ See Sparke (1986) p52 for a description of Abram Games' wartime career.

¹²⁰ Quoted in Sparke p52.

¹²¹ Games (1960) pp8-9.

¹²² The period since September 2001 (9.11) has been one of renewed interest in the quality of Government communications and propaganda.

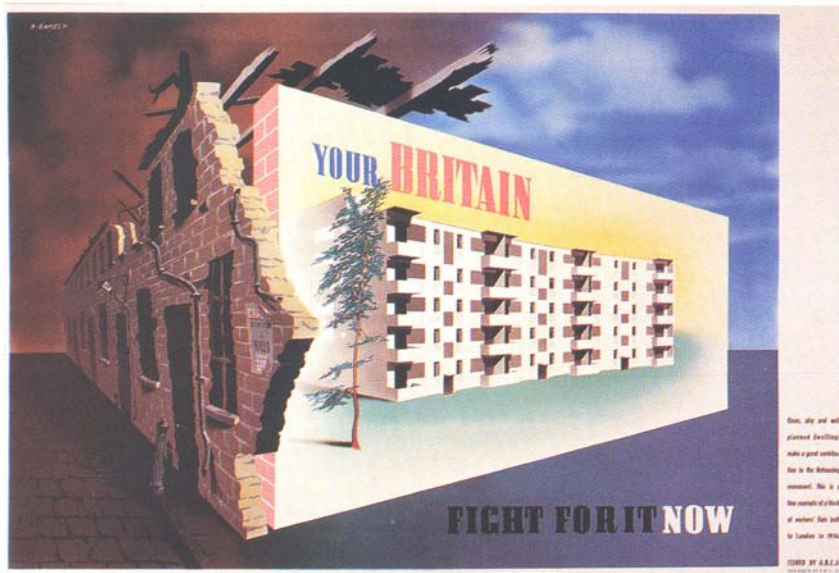


Figure 16. Army Bureau of Current Affairs poster by Abram Games

"Your Britain Fight For It Now"

"Housing"

1942

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

uncompromising approach to design. There is no space for humour or for the surreal transformations that are part of the RoSPA campaign. The contrast is most clearly seen in the two posters that communicate the responsibilities and consequences of security. The “Fougasse” posters and “*Talk Kills*” by Games could hardly be more different. Whereas “Fougasse” uses humour to make his point about constant vigilance and, at the same time, lampoons the Dictators; Games paints a vivid picture of the fatal consequences of indiscretion.

The political potential of this material has been recognised, in part at least, by Neil Grant (1984) writing in “*Formations*” who describes the activities of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs (ABCA) in terms of a political consciousness raising amongst the conscript army. This consciousness raising activity - of extending the reach of politics into everyday life - was part of ABCA's attempts to present a sophisticated motivation to soldiers in terms of fighting to preserve certain values and of fighting to create a new world based on social justice and equality of opportunity. The two sets of ABCA posters are probably the only posters from the military side that echo the humanist values of the RoSPA campaign and speak of a world beyond the present harsh realities of conscript life. Notwithstanding the evident quality of the posters designed by Abram Games it should be remembered that the civilian involvement in war work, production and civil defence required a mobilisation far in excess of that required by the military.



Figure 17. Army Bureau of Current Affairs poster by Frank Newbould

"Your Britain Fight For It Now"

"South Downs"

1943

Imperial War Museum

The three posters in the ABCA series By Games present the idea of a new, reconstructed and Modernist Britain, rising from the ashes of the old. The second poster's theme is "*Health*" illustrated with Tecton Architects' Finsbury Health Centre and the third poster shows Impington School by Fry and Gropius as emblematic of "*Education*." The poster for "Housing" is reproduced as figure 16 (p78). The emancipatory benefits of improved housing, healthcare and education for all had been recognised as fundamental to the creation of a more socially just and equitable society. These themes had been addressed in the pages of "*Picture Post*" during January 1941 in their "*Plan for Britain*." From that moment the circumstances of war were associated with the political projects of victory, transformation and reconstruction. See figure 18 (p86).

There are also a series of ABCA posters by Frank Newbould, who was assisting Games, to illustrate the themes of continuity, heritage and landscape as emblematic of British national identity. David Matless (1998) has written about the way that the English landscape became part of a discourse that spoke, especially in the middle years of the 20th century, of national identity by appeal to a re-ordered landscape with different characters set into it.¹²³ The Newbould posters provide compelling and contemporary evidence for this thesis.¹²⁴ Newbould's poster for "The South Downs" is reproduced as figure 17 (p80).

¹²³ Matless (1998) pp234-241 examines the new model of community addressed by post-war reconstruction.

¹²⁴ Naomi Games, the designer's daughter recalled (in a talk on 22.11.03) that the commission to Abram Games was for six posters. Games sub-contracted three of the posters to his assistant Frank Newbould.

The two sets of ABCA posters are crucial evidence, in their looking both to the future and to the past, of the complexities of cultural construction in Britain during the 1930s and into WW2. The interplay of elements of both Modernism and tradition in the cultural discourse of the 1930s is a recurring theme and is also characteristic of the cultural anxiety felt by the establishment class and expressed by Harold Nicolson at the MOI. George Orwell expressed the problem more forthrightly as being a consequence of the fact that, “economically, England is certainly two nations, if not three or four.”¹²⁵

The desire to communicate with these “other nations” and to stake out the common language of English culture finds expression, prior to Orwell, in a wide variety of writings during the inter-war period in Britain. Calder (1991) writes convincingly about the creation of a “Deep England” as a sustaining idea at home and abroad. The names associated with this project are those of Powell, Pressburger, Jennings, McNeice, Priestley, Wintringham and Orwell.¹²⁶

Surprisingly, Calder makes hardly mention of the multitude of poster images created by the MOI during this period. More recently, Michael Saler (1999) has written of the sustaining vision of community, as a foil to metropolitan Modernist anxieties, which was provided by northern and

¹²⁵ Orwell (1941) p27.

¹²⁶ The project took the form of writing and film making extending from Tallents (1933) “*A Projection of England*” to Lauder and Gilliat’s “*Millions Like Us*” (1943) and Powell and Pressburger’s “*Canterbury Tales*” (1944). The significance of film as cultural production is acknowledged through the extensive bibliography relating British films and evolving concepts of national identity. See, for example, Richards (1997) and Carrick (1943). Purcell (2004) pp213-215 explains that the project also took a more obviously political turn when, from December 1941, meetings were held of *The 1941 Committee*. The Committee was superseded by the creation of the Common Wealth Party.

provincial traditions.¹²⁷ Saler's writings connect the Victorian Arts and Crafts movement with the 1930s Modernism of London Transport through the life of Frank Pick and suggest that his work at London Transport was a final, and successful, manifestation of a concept he identifies as "Medieval Modernism."¹²⁸

These cultural interventions are part of a process that, in Britain, produced what Orwell described as the feeling of, "something distinctive and recognisable in English civilisation. Moreover it is continuous, it stretches into the future and into the past, there is something in it that persists."¹²⁹ Orwell's own attempts to describe the connecting threads of English culture are expressed most completely in his wartime polemic *"The Lion and The Unicorn"* and in his description of the honour and patriotism of ordinary people. Orwell found the distinctive characteristics of English civilisation in the values and manners of its people rather than in the appearance of the landscapes of England or of the glories of its military history. The cultural values of gentleness and tolerance were rooted, for Orwell, in the small considerations of everyday life that he observed amongst the people. Thus he was able to write of English life as having "a soundness and homogeneity" that would, ultimately, provide the resistance to dictatorship and totalitarianism.¹³⁰ It was also these values that supported the RoSPA campaign.

¹²⁷ Saler (1999) pp34-35.

¹²⁸ This concept allows for a later, Modernist, design reform to be reconciled with its English Arts and Crafts precedents that stressed a retreat from industrial values through an embrace of craft skills. The synthesis of these different strands in English Modernism is one of its distinguishing characteristics. The complexities of this synthesis are investigated in Part Two, Section Two of this thesis (page 219).

¹²⁹ Orwell (1941) p11.

¹³⁰ Orwell (1941) p22.

Orwell's concern was with the ability of the establishment class to effectively manage and plan for victory. The experiences of British politics in the 1930s had made him doubtful of their abilities and he famously expressed those doubts with the assertion that, "England is a family with the wrong members in control."¹³¹ For Orwell the victorious outcome of WW2 was inseparable from the requirement for irrevocable social change.

Orwell's biographer Bernard Crick has described Orwell's essay as "the only book ever written which saw revolutionary possibilities in the English national character."¹³² Orwell recognised that WW2 was being fought out, at home and abroad, by competing cultures and he realised that the international struggle against the totalitarian dictatorships could only be successful by the mobilisation of "new blood, new men, new ideas – in the true sense of the word, a revolution."¹³³ The new men he identified as amongst this "new blood" were those most at home in the Modern world. Orwell's list included the "technicians and the higher paid workers, the airmen and their mechanics, the radio experts, film producers, popular journalists and industrial chemists."¹³⁴ He would certainly have included the term graphic designer amongst this list of technocrats had the term existed at the time.

The RoSPA posters are evidence of this particularly English reconfiguration of the rights and responsibilities that attach themselves to

¹³¹ Orwell (1941) p35

¹³² Crick quoted in Colls (2001) p129.

¹³³ Orwell (1941) p70.

¹³⁴ Orwell (1941) p54.

the relations between capital and labour. The claim that the special conditions of “total war” offer possibilities of radical change forms the basis of Arthur Marwick's *“Total War and Social Change.”*¹³⁵ These possibilities extend to groups, hitherto marginalised by the established forms of political communication, as they are brought into the war effort. The radical potential implicit within this collective experience has been questioned.¹³⁶

The effort to reaffirm these claims, in relation to the RoSPA campaign and the industrial workforce, forms a secondary objective of this project.

¹³⁵ Marwick (1988) pxvi.

¹³⁶ Summerfield (1984) p123 is equivocal in her analysis of the benefits to women of the “Home-Front” experience.

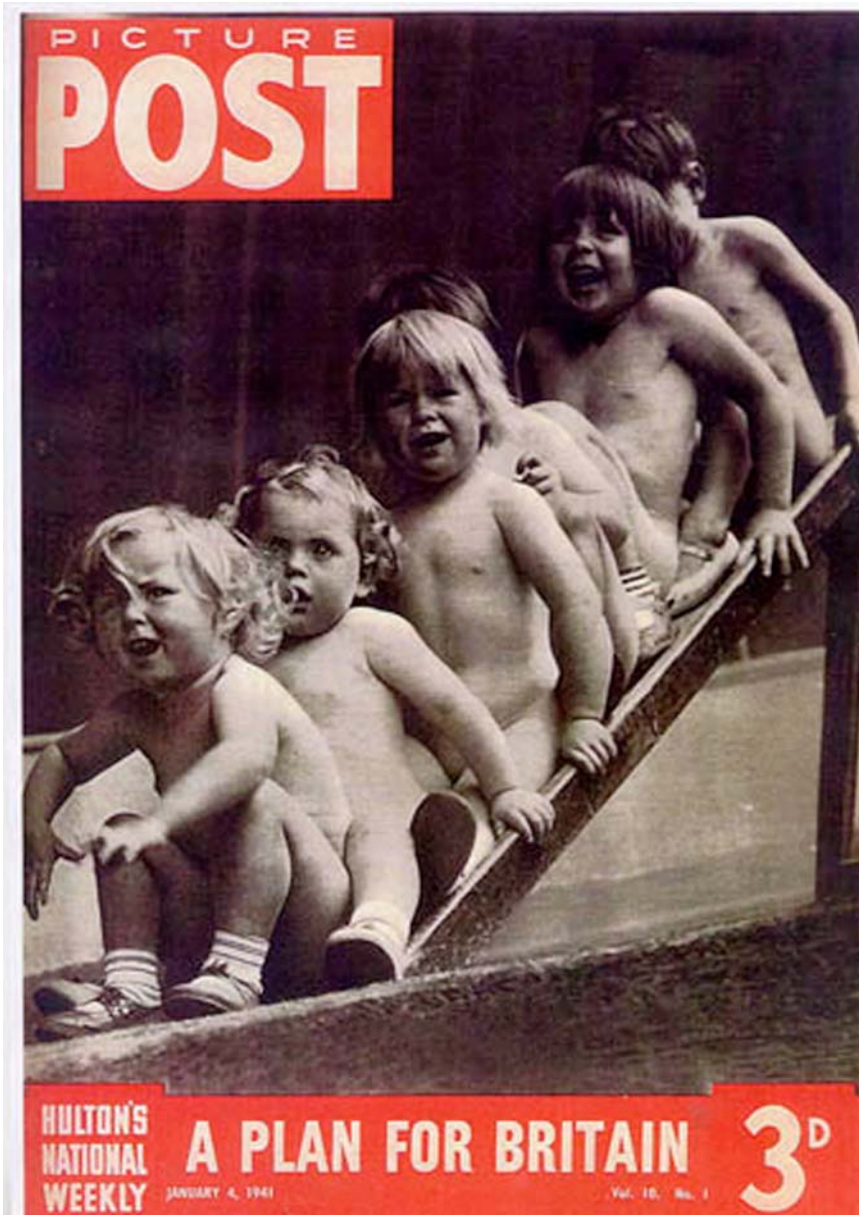


Figure 18. Cover of "Picture Post" magazine

"A Plan for Britain"

4th January 1941

Central St Martin's Library, University of the Arts, London

Community, Technology and Graphic Communication

The potential for political engagement through graphic communication had been explored in a variety of forms throughout the 1930s. In Europe, the political Left had addressed this potential in the theoretical writings of Walter Benjamin and Antonio Gramsci, amongst others. Both these writers examine cultural production as part of a process that leads, ultimately, to a violent change in political power. Benjamin wrote, in *"The Author as Producer,"* of the intellectual and material conditions that constitute "Modern work" - of the impact of mass production in the cultural sphere and of the emergence of a mass market for such products.¹³⁷ These progressive characteristics are the basis of Jobling and Crowley's (1996) definition of graphic design in their *"Reproduction and Representation."*¹³⁸ The limited opportunities for poster design in Britain before WW2 mean that, under the above criteria, the posters of the 1930s, whatever their origin, could never qualify as properly Modern and, in consequence, revolutionary. It is only the demanding circumstances of war propaganda that usher in a period where mass production, mechanical reproduction and economy were formally incorporated into poster design.

The development of pictorial magazines such as *"Picture Post"* and *"Weekly Illustrated"* provided a new platform for advertisers and commercial artists to address a readership hitherto ignored by the

¹³⁷ These conditions are listed as the special characteristics of a culturally significant form of graphic design by Jobling and Crowley (1996) p3.

¹³⁸ Jobling and Crowley (1996) p30.

mainstream press. *“Picture Post”* was established by the émigré journalist Stefan Lorant who had arrived from Hungary, via Germany, in 1934. Lorant had been a photographer and film cameraman. He had also been on the staff of the Munich picture weekly *“Münchener Illustrierte”* where he had been involved in the development of a fresh and exciting picture journalism.¹³⁹ When he arrived in England no such opportunities existed and he set about establishing a similar magazine format. Lorant spent a brief time at Odhams Press working on their *“Weekly Illustrated”* before being offered the opportunity to establish a picture magazine for the Hulton Press group. The first issue was published in October 1938. Lorant conceived of a magazine that, “promoted photography as a journalistic weapon in its own right.”¹⁴⁰ Lorant was helped by a young journalist that he had met at Odham’s, Tom Hopkinson, who was eventually to become the magazine’s most successful editor.

The real political message of *“Picture Post,”* however, came not in a political form but in the radical humanist values that informed every aspect of the *“Post’s”* journalism.¹⁴¹ The magazine styled itself “the paper for the man in the street who thinks of himself as more than that.”¹⁴² The magazine began a process of discussion that George Orwell described as marking the beginning of a period of dramatic social change. Furthermore, what Orwell and the Editors of *“Picture Post”* understood was that the war made social change more likely, rather than less, and that, “the war has speeded it (the rate of change) up, but also increased,

¹³⁹ Kee (1989) unpaginated.

¹⁴⁰ Kee (1989) unpaginated.

¹⁴¹ Kee (1989) unpaginated (Hulton’s imprint).

¹⁴² Kee (1989) unpaginated.

and desperately, the necessity for speed.”¹⁴³ The RoSPA posters form, I believe, part of this dramatic process. The debate was started by the publication, in *“Picture Post,”* of *“A Plan for Britain.”*¹⁴⁴ The cover of *“Picture Post’s” “Plan for Britain”* (1941) is reproduced as figure 18 (p86).

“The Plan for Britain” established an agenda for the post-war creation of a humane society in which the economic and social problems of the 1930s were addressed through the development of an infrastructure of state support and welfare provision. The terms of this vision were outlined in the contents of the *“Plan.”*¹⁴⁵ Orwell recognised the political potential of *“Picture Post”* and claimed that “the old distinction between Right and Left broke down when *“Picture Post”* was first published.”¹⁴⁶ The synchronicity of these publications and the appearance of the RoSPA posters is not, I believe, coincidental.¹⁴⁷

Inside the magazine the *“Plan”* looked at housing and health, education and employment; addressing these themes in terms of social justice and fairness. Each section of the *“Plan”* had a polemical text by an

¹⁴³ Orwell (1941) p87.

¹⁴⁴ *“A Plan for Britain”* in *“Picture Post”* London, January 4th 1941.

¹⁴⁵ The contents of the *“Plan”* were *“This is the Problem”* by B L Coombes (a Welsh miner) pp7-9, *“Work for All”* by Thomas Balogh pp10-13, *“Social Security”* by A D K Owen pp14-15, *“The New Britain Must be Planned”* by Maxwell Fry pp16-20, *“Plan the Home”* by Elizabeth Denby pp21-25, *“The Land for All”* by LF Eastlerbrook pp24-26, *“Education”* by A D Lindsay pp27-31, *“Health for All”* by Julian Huxley pp32-35, *“A Real Medical Service”* by Dr Maurice Newfield pp36-37, *“When Work is Over”* by J B Priestley pp38-40 and an editorial comment by Edward Hulton *“Give Youth a Chance”* that emphasised the need to maintain the meritocratic momentum of the war. The prevailing mood defined by *“Picture Post”* was of a desire to resolve the social and economic difficulties of the 1930s through the proper use, management and planning of resources. The mood was summed up in the phrase “Never Again.” The propagandising of *“Picture Post”* has been analysed by Hall (1972) who has identified its “social vision” as an important element in the success of the Social-Democratic project in Britain. The visual projection of these arguments created a completely new kind of popular visual culture as evidenced by Carrick (1943).

¹⁴⁶ Orwell (1941) p87.

¹⁴⁷ Another manifestation of this meritocratic tendency was Alan Lane’s Penguin Books. The significance of this cultural production has been described by Joicey (1993). See also *“Fifty Penguin Years”* by Aynsley, Bradbury and Jones (1985).

acknowledged expert and was supported by photographs and statistical information. There were also artistic impressions of how the city might look in the future. The “*Plan*” was followed up by a continuing debate in subsequent issues of “*Picture Post*.” The Left political establishment was, notwithstanding these efforts, generally slow to embrace the potential of graphic design in its propaganda before 1939.

For example, a survey of Trades Union posters suggests that, before about 1935, the prevailing form of communication was through letterpress posters and announcements.¹⁴⁸ This form of public address is usually associated with the 19th century public notice and was probably 100 years out of date by the 1930s! The continued use of such communications was a reflection of the printing facilities to which local Labour groups had access. The RoSPA campaign is part of a revolution in political communication in both its embrace of sophisticated visual elements as part of the message and in the scope of its reach beyond the normal, tribal, forms of political community.

Howard Wadman, writing in “*Typography*” Number 3 (1937) expressed the anxiety, widespread amongst Conservatives, that capitalism was already in crisis.¹⁴⁹ Part of that crisis, suggested Wadman, was due to a failure of the British Right to engage with presentational values and to dismiss any concern for presentation as lightweight.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Rodney Mace (1999) pp86-87 for examples.

¹⁴⁹ Harold Wadman “*Left wing Layout*” in “*Typography*,” No3, Summer 1937, London p25.

¹⁵⁰ Wadman (1937) p28.

In fact, as the Trades Union posters suggest, the graphic and visual sophistication of Left-wing publishing was overstated. Beyond London, the movement could only mobilize local resources and these were usually of limited capacity and capability.

George Orwell recognised that WW2 was being fought, at home and abroad, by competing cultures and he realised that the international struggle against the totalitarian dictatorships could only be successful by the mobilisation of “new blood, new men and new ideas.”¹⁵¹ The graphic expression of these ideas becomes the primary, and most urgent, function of the poster designer in wartime. In consequence the status of the design process is changed and more widely recognised as both technical and precise.

The appeal to George Orwell in connection with propaganda images is not without irony. Orwell was famously damning in his analysis of communications between political leaders and the public. Orwell’s antipathy to propaganda communications stems from his perception that the so-called “propaganda victory” of WW1 was both a fraud and betrayal of the English character. The most effective propaganda of WW1 was accepted to be that based on the fiction of German atrocities and the demonisation of the enemy.¹⁵² The fact that, retrospectively, the most effective propaganda was recognised as being based on falsehood has tended, since the 1930s, to result in a popular perception of all propaganda as a form of falsehood. The RoSPA posters are worth

¹⁵¹ Orwell (1941) p70.

¹⁵² Hardie and Sabin (1920) p2 emphasise the point that the British propaganda was more effective than its German counterparts although less well designed.

investigating because they are both propaganda and manifestly driven by a desire for an ethical and humane development of the workplace. A workshop environment that exploits or degrades its workers would have no place for such communications.

Hitchens (2002) has written of "*Orwell's Victory*" in terms of his correct analysis of the three big political problems of the 20th century: "Imperialism, Fascism and Communism."¹⁵³ Hitchens also marks out Orwell's prescience with regard to contemporary issues and itemises them in a partial list that includes reference to "the English question, his interest in popular culture and his concern with the natural environment."¹⁵⁴ These characteristics mark Orwell, suggests Hitchens, as an independent thinker and writer. Orwell's bona fides in relation to his analysis of popular culture in Britain begin with his analysis of "Schoolboy Magazines." An analysis that Raymond Williams once claimed had more-or-less invented cultural studies.¹⁵⁵ Orwell was also working on a project that would investigate the world of women's magazines; but that particular project was never realised.

There is no record of Orwell ever commenting on the RoSPA posters specifically. Orwell's use in relation to this project is in his deep understanding of the cultural forces at work in Britain before and during the war. Orwell presents a trajectory of ideas that links national survival to political change and to the emergence of a new technocratic class. The force of his arguments is relentless and the direction of his narrative

¹⁵³ Hitchens (2002) p4.

¹⁵⁴ Hitchens (2002) p8.

¹⁵⁵ Williams quoted in Hitchens (2002) p8.

unambiguous, “we cannot win the war without introducing Socialism; nor establish Socialism without winning the war.”¹⁵⁶

It is Orwell’s sense of this direction that allows us to locate the RoSPA posters within the context of an English social revolution and to connect design, technology, organisation, politics and values. Furthermore, the RoSPA posters provide, in the regional associations of their production and distribution, a link between the progressive social values of English Modernism and a humanist, mostly northern, tradition of emancipatory collectivity that is rooted in the communitarian traditions of religious Nonconformism.¹⁵⁷

The alignment between Nonconformism and Modernism is complex and requires some explanation. It is not clear how, at first glance, a tradition that has its origins in the Puritanism of the 17th century and is identified with an austere rejection of Modernity’s “temptations” can have manoeuvred itself into such an influential position. Samuel (1998) has examined the legacy of Nonconformism and traced its connections with the reform movements in later 19th century politics.¹⁵⁸ Samuel suggests that the recasting of Nonconformism, into a progressive and Modernising

¹⁵⁶ Orwell (1941) p95.

¹⁵⁷ Religious Nonconformism is part of the RoSPA story through its connections to both the Quaker and Baptist communities. Whilst the Nonconformist contribution to the evolution of Left politics is acknowledged (see Bullock (1960) p9 or Davies (1992) pp23-24 who quotes Keir Hardie and describes his project to combine Labour politics and Nonconformism around the concept of a “New Jerusalem”) the contribution to English Modernism through design remains largely uncharted. In part this is because the prevailing narrative of modernism has attached itself to philosophical and political values of individualism and secularisation whilst ignoring the origins of these concepts in religious tolerance. The complexities of the emergence of Nonconformism in Britain are beyond the scope of this project. We need only, at this stage, acknowledge that the Quaker community has made a virtue of economic engagement with the wider community and has championed a form of ethical capitalism. The 17th century origins of the community are described in Arthur Raistrick’s *“Quakers in Science and Industry”* (1993).

¹⁵⁸ Samuel (1998) p305.

force, was a consequence of the development of a public service ethos created to serve the Empire and fostered through the University reforms of the 1870s.¹⁵⁹ By the beginning of the 20th century the reformed Universities had produced a cohort of administrators and teachers schooled, “on a theory of social obligation that stressed duty, discipline and the subordination of the self.”¹⁶⁰ These people provided, “a moral earnestness and empowered a generation to take on the parson and the squire.”¹⁶¹ The Nonconformist Modernising tendencies found expression, suggests Samuel, in a variety of activities. Chief amongst these was the belief in emancipation through education, the beginnings of the feminist movement, the sexual radicalism of Havelock Ellis and belief in the “New Hygiene” that found expression through rational dress and the clean air of the garden city.¹⁶² Another strand of Nonconformist activity was in the enforcement of an enthusiastic Puritan tradition of temperance within and without the workplace.¹⁶³

Quaker pacifism was mobilised into an influential and powerful force through the Union of Democratic Control. The Union was an attempt to create an alternative form of politics in Britain based on transparency and pacifism. The vested interests of diplomatic intrigue and of the military industrial complex undermined the popular appeal of the Union through a ceaseless campaign waged against it in the popular press. Quaker interests were represented amongst the leaders of the Union.

¹⁵⁹ Samuel (1998) p297.

¹⁶⁰ Samuel (1998) p297.

¹⁶¹ Samuel (1998) p293.

¹⁶² Samuel (1998) p305.

¹⁶³ The alignment between Puritan values and Labour politics has been criticised for, “confusing a moral seriousness with a general joylessness.” Tony Crosland identified, “the signposts towards a Socialist Utopia as total abstinence and a good filing system,” (quoted in Davies (1992) p190).

The Union published many pamphlets during the 1920s and 30s. Several of which have cover designs by Edward McKnight Kauffer.¹⁶⁴ The use of dramatic graphic design on the covers of political pamphlets was unusual at the time and the UDC may be counted as pioneers in their attempt to project an alternative political vision to an audience beyond party membership.¹⁶⁵

The connection between the RoSPA posters and Nonconformism is intriguing. It forces us to re-examine the narratives of Nonconformism that emphasise its retreat from worldly pleasures and to look again at the trajectory of Modernism as a relentless and necessary process of secularisation. The practical engagement Quaker interests with the prevailing market conditions of society have resulted in a series of well known business successes that have provided a template for a more humane, and successful, relationship between capital and labour.¹⁶⁶ The synthesis, within English Modernism, of these disparate traditions is unique. The expression of that synthesis, through the images of the

¹⁶⁴ See, for example, "*Patriotism Ltd*" (1933) and "*Gas*" (1935) for Kauffer cover designs.

¹⁶⁵ J B Morrell (a Liberal and Quaker), Chairman of the RoSPA printers, Loxley Brothers was a supporter of the UDC. Indeed, the UDC pamphlets were printed by the Westminster Press Group of newspaper and printing interests. The Managing Director of the group was J B Morrell and its largest shareholder the Rowntree Trust. An account of Morrell's newspaper career is included in Vernon (1966) pp159-162.

The history of the Westminster Press is included in Howes (2000) pp16-31 and in Dreyfus (1990). The Westminster Press had begun as general printers with close links to the Catholic Church. The firm passed into the hands of Gerard Maynell (Francis Meynell's cousin) in 1901 who positioned the firm at the forefront of typographic and technical progress. The firm appointed Edward McKnight Kauffer as Director of Poster and Pictorial Advertising.

¹⁶⁶ The business successes of the Quakers include Barclay's Bank, Rowntree's of York and Cadbury's of Bournville. Each of these firms was well known for the support it gave to its community of workers and the success of these firms has been seen as a powerful indictment of more ruthless capital.

RoSPA campaign is an unexpected manifestation of the complexity of English Modernism.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ The connection between Nonconformism and the industrial design is best known through the artefacts of the Shaker community in North America. The Shakers were at the forefront of agricultural reform and husbandry during the early 19th century. They were expert seed growers and developed a refined sense of typographic expression for their seed packets and merchandising. See Munich (1974) plate 71 for an example of their letterpress typography. See also Wood (2004) for various accounts of the links between science, progress and Nonconformism.

Graphic Authorship

The American designer and critic Ellen Lupton has written about the changing role of the designer in society. She has collaborated with the graphics collector Merrill Berman to look at the changing nature of graphic authorship within the context of the Soviet Modernism of the 1920s and 30s. Lupton (1998) argues that the political potential of Soviet propaganda could only be realised by designers successfully embracing the available printing technology. She argues that the technological determinants of Modernist graphic design are located in the transition from letterpress to lithography; but that the technology is insufficient on its own. It requires the intervention of technicians who can mobilise its potential through “the techniques of typo-photo and montage.”¹⁶⁸

The Soviet designers achieved this by embracing the idea of montage (the juxtaposition of reconfigured photographic elements into a whole) as part of an industrial process of production rather than as part of an avant-gardist manipulation of the image.¹⁶⁹ For El Lissitzky, montage was less an avant-garde invention, more a consequence of the highly developed technique of the process block and half-tone screen. The move from a craft based practice to a technical process was embraced, in the Soviet context, as part of the move to producer, or “constructor,” of a new culture.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Lupton (1998) p81.

¹⁶⁹ Lupton (1998) p77.

¹⁷⁰ Lupton (1998) p81.

For Lupton this transition has a contemporary resonance with the opportunities offered to designers by the advent of digital technologies. The challenge is for authors to become producers, in Walter Benjamin's sense, by taking control of tools and publishing and to move production beyond the look of the artefact and to transform its dissemination and use.¹⁷¹ The transitions described by Lupton are exactly those presented by the circumstances of the RoSPA campaign and its poster images.

Within the British context the evolution in graphic authorship prefigured by the RoSPA campaign made possible a post-war explosion in the quantity and quality of graphic communications. The alignment of graphic design with other forms of technocratic activities made short-run printing an economic possibility and greatly increased the scope for graphic production. The changing role of the designer was described, by Herbert Read, in *"The Practice of Design"* (1946). Read was optimistic that the technological virtues, "of precision, simplicity, calculation and economy would appeal to the industrial worker" and warned of the dangers in imposing old aesthetic values on the "nascent sensibilities of this new audience."¹⁷² The virtues outlined by Read are precisely those that exemplify the technical construction of graphic design and mechanical reproduction.

The continuing evolution of graphic authorship in relation to changing technologies is summarised in the final section of the thesis.

¹⁷¹ Lupton (1998) p81.

¹⁷² Read (1946) p20.

The Review has established that the RoSPA posters have been overlooked in the history of poster design. The technological and cultural determinants that will be used to contextualise their unlikely emergence during WW2 have been outlined. We may now examine the RoSPA organisation and its industrial safety poster campaign in detail.

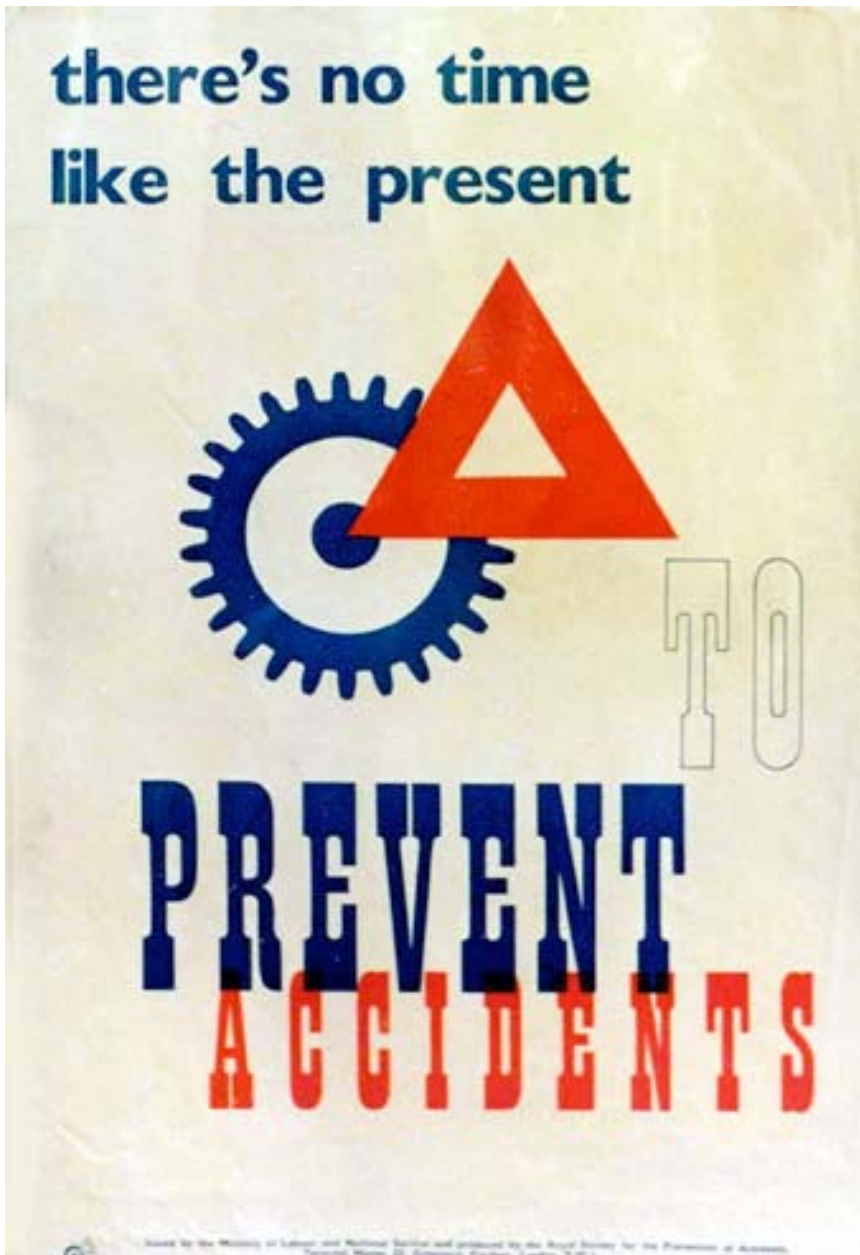


Figure 19. RoSPA text message poster

*"There's No Time Like the Present to
Prevent Accidents"*

1942

Imperial War Museum

Part One
RoSPA

Part One

The Story of RoSPA

Part One provides the central narrative of this thesis. It is divided into three sections. The first section describes the Story of RoSPA. The second introduces the personalities who were able, through their roles in the administration, to shape the ROSPA campaign. Finally, the third section identifies the developing technology of mechanical reproduction and of RoSPA's printers, Loxley Brothers of Sheffield, as a crucial determinant in the RoSPA campaign. The contribution to RoSPA of Loxley Brothers is described in detail. This is the first detailed account of RoSPA's Industrial Safety poster campaign during WW2.

The first section details the history of RoSPA from its origins through to the end of WW2. This is done in three subsections; the first describes RoSPA's development from its beginnings to 1939, the second describes the emergence of Industrial Safety as a particular concern for RoSPA after the Factories Act of 1937 and describes the service provided by RoSPA to its industrial membership. The third describes RoSPA role during WW2 and the expansion of its Industrial Service as a powerful and practical support for the production efforts of war.

The second major section examines RoSPA's use of design as an element in RoSPA's safety propaganda and introduces the main personalities behind the direction of RoSPA's campaign and its use of

design as an element in the successful communication of its message. The section begins with a look at the antecedents of workshop safety posters and distinguishes the RoSPA material from its predecessors at home and abroad. The powerful political personality of Ernest Bevin is identified as crucial to the success of the RoSPA campaign during WW2. Bevin's Nonconformist background and his friendship with Frank Pick are presented as important in assuring the successful projection of values beyond RoSPA's immediate practical objectives.

The section continues with a description of the Publicity Committee within RoSPA's organisation. The addition of Ashley Havinden and Francis Meynell to the Publicity Committee is used to support RoSPA's progressive approach to design. The section concludes with a brief description of the development of poster design in Britain during the 1930s. RoSPA's poster design during WW2 reflects a continuing experimentation in the use of photographic elements in poster design and the integration of word and image through mechanical reproduction. The roster of designers used by RoSPA is described.

Section Three describes the processes and the technologies of mechanical reproduction used by the ROSPA printer, Loxley Brothers of Sheffield. The use of the most up-to-date processes of mechanical reproduction in the creation of RoSPA's industrial propaganda provide a platform of economy and efficiency that underwrite its success as propaganda. The technological determinants of the ROSPA campaign are identified as crucial to its success during WW2.

The Origins of RoSPA

**An accident in the works is as much a gain to the enemy
as a casualty in the armed forces¹⁷³**

Lord McGowan, President of RoSPA, 1939

The origins of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) are to be found in the voluntary and charitable organisation of the London Safety-First Association (LSFA). The organisation was formed, at the very end of 1916, in response to the increasing number of road traffic accidents and fatalities on metropolitan streets. The circumstances of war and of the blackout exacerbated an existing problem and prompted the formation of the LSFA.

The focus of LSFA activity was, in the first instance, road safety and education for both motorists and pedestrians. The success of the scheme in London led to the subsequent formation of regional groups and a national organisation was created named the National Safety First Association (NSFA).¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Lord McGowan addressing the RoSPA delegates at the annual convention 1939.

Transcript held in the RoSPA Archive, National Executive Committee papers (D.266/2/8).

¹⁷⁴ No substantial history of RoSPA has been published. The history of the organisation, presented here, has been pieced together from the transcripts and documents contained in the archive. Some historical notes are included on the RoSPA website www.rospace.com. A celebratory pamphlet was published by RoSPA on the occasion of their 75th anniversary in 1992 and distributed to the membership.

The antecedents of RoSPA within the activities of the LSFA and the NSFA are interesting in the contrasts that they offer between the qualities of visual material produced to address their pre-war audience of road users and the material aimed at the industrial workforce of WW2 which we will examine later. Figure 20 (p106) shows a poster designed by the German émigré designer Hans Schleger to coincide with the “*Highway Code*” exhibition at Charing Cross Underground Station, London, in 1937. The exhibition was organised by the Ministry of Transport and was the centrepiece of a “Safety Week” of co-ordinated events under the auspices of the LSFA Committee. The production of road safety posters designed by Abram Games confirms the ambition of the NSFA to project its message. A pre-war road safety poster by Abram Games is reproduced as figure 21 (p108).

The design sophistication implied by the involvement of the émigré designer Hans Schleger seems to have been limited to the London Committee and to applied only to road safety issues. The design was not circulated elsewhere. The Executive did not prioritise industrial safety propaganda or the use of “design” in RoSPA’s address to this worker constituency. The “*Highway Code*” exhibition cannot therefore be taken as a proper antecedent of RoSPA’s industrial safety propaganda of WW2. If anything, the evidence of Schleger’s involvement in design for the LSFA confirms that the Committee was, even at the end of the 1930s, making assumptions about the sophistication of their different audiences and about communicating effectively. In defence of the LSFA it should be noted that they were not unique in facing this difficulty. One



Figure 20. LSFA road safety poster by Hans Schlegel (Zero)

"Safety Week"

1937

Zero Studio Archive

of the unexpected benefits of WW2 was that communications between different classes became very much easier. The RoSPA posters are part of this transformation in communications.

The LSFA and its regional counterparts were established as charitable organisations supported by local authorities. An official within local government was designated “Safety Officer” and became the channel through which the NSFA communicated with its member authorities.

The limited resources available to the NSFA provide a background against which the evolution of its educational propaganda may be plotted. The models available to the NSFA were those fund-raising and awareness events that had been established during WW1.¹⁷⁵

Accordingly, it was decided that resources should be channelled into week-long events and exhibitions. The “Safety Week” event became a staple of NSFA activities throughout the 1930s and was to provide a platform for a co-ordinated series of smaller events and public relations. It should be stressed that the centrepiece of these activities was usually an exhibition.¹⁷⁶ The exhibition was publicised through contacts that had been established with the local press and through the use of some poster material. However, the absence of designated spaces for the display of poster material beyond local authority buildings tended to limit the potential effectiveness of such posters.

¹⁷⁵ See for example “Munitions Week” or flag-day propaganda of WW1.

¹⁷⁶ Exhibition design, including travelling and lorry-based exhibitions, was the most significant feature of RoSPA propaganda before WW2. Exhibition design falls beyond the scope of this thesis.



Figure 21. NSFA road safety poster by Abram Games

"Halt at Major Road Ahead"

1938

Estate of Abram Games

Within the limits of NSFA's activities it should be understood that the opportunities for the creation of posters and graphic propaganda were very limited. This changed with the creation of NSFA's Industrial Service.

The potential membership for this section was much greater than that addressed by the other sections of NSFA. Furthermore, every member factory would, as a matter of principle, have a designated area for the display of safety propaganda.



Figure 22. RoSPA strip cartoon poster by Mendoza

"Percy Vere"

1943

Imperial War Museum

RoSPA and Industrial Safety

Before WW2

The Factories Act, of 1937, established a responsibility, albeit a discretionary one, on the part of employers to assure the safe working conditions of their employees. In consequence, industrial safety became a significant part of NSFA activity.¹⁷⁷ The NSFA recognised accident prevention as best practice on both humanitarian and business grounds. The first posters for industrial safety are recorded, within the NSFA and RoSPA Archive, as dating from 1936. No copies of these posters have been traced but the RoSPA Archive held in the University of Liverpool Library contains a series of printed sheets showing various poster designs available, by order, to the members.¹⁷⁸ The first sheet, published in association with the Industrial Welfare Society shows 21 poster designs. Subsequent designs were made available at quarterly intervals. These early designs are unsigned and printed in single colour. The designs are characterised by simple text messages and crude visual images in a literal style. There is certainly nothing as visually sophisticated as the Schleger design mentioned earlier. The themes of

¹⁷⁷ The British Industrial Safety First Association was founded in 1918 and had been incorporated with the LSFA to create the NSFA in 1923. Industrial Safety activity seems to have been fitful until the eve of WW2.

¹⁷⁸ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Safety Committee papers (D.266/2/19).

the campaigns are to prevent accidents by, “observing rules or procedure and to avoid ‘larking about’ in the factory.”¹⁷⁹

By 1939 the NSFA had developed into an organisation with three main areas of activity each with its own organisational division. These were of Industrial Safety, of Road Safety and Education, and, lastly, of Home Safety. The Industrial Safety division had since 1937 developed a core service. This service was established around the provision of training, literature and the accurate keeping of statistical information. The service was available to enterprises on a subscription basis and membership was to a Regional Committee – the meetings of which were the main forum for discussing fatal and serious accidents and for assessing the success of its activities. During 1939 the NSFA successfully applied for a change of name endorsed by Royal Charter. In consequence from July 1940 the organisation became officially known as the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents.

The headquarters office of RoSPA was based in London.¹⁸⁰ The office in London made use of a small number of permanent staff. Lieutenant Colonel V A A Pickard, an ex-army officer, was the Chief Executive of the organisation. His secretary was Miss Helen Sutherland. Lt Col Pickard’s position within RoSPA had been established by his interest in road safety and his prominence within the organisation reflects the importance, before WW2, of road safety as opposed to industrial safety. The structure

¹⁷⁹ It was discovered that a substantial number of accidents were caused by jokes, or initiation pranks amongst workers, that went wrong.

¹⁸⁰ The headquarters were evacuated to Cheltenham during 1940 but was quickly returned to London. The London address was Terminal House, 52 Grosvenor Gardens, SW1.

of the organisation was based around a series of committees, each answerable to the National Executive.

The Executive Committee, with Pickard at its head, comprised members drawn from the Publicity and Finance Committees along with representatives of the main areas of RoSPA activity. The Publicity Committee established the parameters of RoSPA's activities and instructed the specialised committees of the Road, Industrial and Home Safety Services. The Publicity Committee had to have its co-ordinated plans approved by the Finance Committee and reported, eventually, to the Executive Committee. By 1946, when the Industrial Service had expanded to become the most important of RoSPA's activities, the continued presence of Pickard and Sutherland was identified as problematic.¹⁸¹ Lord McGowan was, during this period, President of NSFA and subsequently RoSPA.

The RoSPA Archive contains material relating to the Regional Committee for Teesside.¹⁸² This area of Britain includes the industrial centre of Middlesbrough with its extensive engineering and chemical interests. This concentration of heavy industry gave RoSPA's activities there an importance that they never matched in areas where industrial plant was more thinly spread. Indeed, RoSPA seems to have been active in the

¹⁸¹ Manuscript internal report signed by A P Young. RoSPA Archive, Industrial Safety Committee papers (D.266/3/2/22).

¹⁸² The regional committees were only instructed to report to London on fatal accidents. The committee was made up of representatives from the larger industrial employers in the area. The area secretary then reported to RoSPA headquarters. There was no worker representation on the committee.

area from the beginnings of its Industrial Service.¹⁸³ The notes of this Regional Committee record the opening address delivered by Lt Col V A A Pickard, the General Secretary of the NSFA, who had travelled up from London and met with the secretary of the Sheffield Region Safety Committee. Pickard suggested the establishing of a “Safety Week” in the area to raise awareness.

The special dangers of the chemical industry highlighted the particular risks of work in the plant. The committee notes in the RoSPA Archive make reference to a recurring series of accidents in the ICI chemical plants that resulted in fatalities and were caused by the erosion of safety harnesses by toxic fumes in the factory. The recording, by RoSPA, of these events identified the risk and enabled the safety harness equipment to be redesigned.¹⁸⁴

The service provided to RoSPA subscribers within the Industrial Section took the form of a supply of printed material. The most important of these was a supply of posters of two kinds – slogan posters with simple text messages and pictorial posters.

RoSPA slogan posters were used for display in factories. These were conceived to be placed alongside RoSPA’s other material and to offer the possibility of a changing display environment for safety messages. Very few slogan posters survive. This may be taken as further evidence of the difficulties in using poster material as supporting evidence for historical

¹⁸³ RoSPA Archive, Regional Safety Committee papers (Teesside).

¹⁸⁴ RoSPA Archive, Regional Safety Committee papers (Teesside).

research. The reasons for their relative scarcity may be explained, in part at least, by the fact that text posters have generally been seen as marginal in relation to the dominant narrative of poster history that has stressed a progressively more sophisticated integration of image and text.¹⁸⁵ It is also possible that these functional posters were used in factories and workshops until they disintegrated. Perhaps their relative scarcity is testimony to the effectiveness of their communications. The Imperial War Museum's collection, which is probably the most complete archive of RoSPA's poster material, includes just three examples of this kind of propaganda. A slogan poster is reproduced as figure 19 (p100).

It is worth mentioning the typographic design of the poster illustrated in figure 19 (p100). The poster is printed two-colour. The cogwheel and warning triangle are the emblems of RoSPA. The main text uses an exaggerated slab-serif letterform. This is in contrast to the lowercase sanserif letterform used for the subtext at the top of the poster. It should be emphasised that use of exaggerated serifs is a particularly English characteristic of graphic sophistication in lettering. The origins of these letterforms are to be found in the display faces of the early 19th century and are traditionally associated with the market square, seaside promenade and the fairground.¹⁸⁶ The combination of sanserif lowercase letterforms and the larger display types is particularly interesting in the context of WW2 where the sanserif letter was adopted, almost

¹⁸⁵ The Victoria and Albert Museum's collection of posters has very few text posters. Margaret Timmers, who is responsible for the collection, has explained that text only posters are usually letterpress printed and have therefore been seen as having bibliographic rather than graphic significance.

¹⁸⁶ The exaggeratedly seriffed letterform became a recognisable characteristic of the Festival of Britain lettering style. The story of the evolution of this style has been told by the author in his *"Fat Faces All Around"* included in the *"Journal of the Twentieth Century Society"* 2001 pp107-116.

universally, for the communications of “War Socialism.” The RoSPA poster represents a sophisticated, almost abstract, use of typography that has its origins in the experimentation of European modernism at the end of the 1920s. The text posters are therefore a good deal more interesting than they might appear. Unfortunately, they do not survive in anything like sufficient numbers to form the basis of study.

The pictorial posters include designs by Tom Eckersley that were the starting point for this project. RoSPA seem to have taken the view, early on, that their campaign and their objectives would be best served if they could avoid using the imagery of accidents and injury. Accordingly, the majority of poster images allude to the consequences of injury rather than show them graphically.

The RoSPA Archive lists the following themes as suitable subjects for poster treatment within the campaign

- electrical dangers
- falling objects
- falling persons – ladders and walkways
- fire and explosion – smoking
- the need for speedy first aid
- handling and lifting – avoiding injury
- hand tools – sharp edges and blades
- horseplay or the dangers of larking about
- housekeeping and tidiness

hygiene
ladders
law and responsibilities
lifting tackle
machines
protective clothing and masks
rushing
safe clothing
safety training
safety week
stacking
stepping on and striking against
traffic
general purpose
general slogans

These themes seem to have formed the basis of the RoSPA campaign throughout WW2 and beyond. The checklist of posters appended to this research illustrates many of the posters created for the campaign and includes a thematic index.



Figure 23. WW2 industrial safety booklet published by RoSPA and illustrated by

"Mendoza"

"Percy's Verses"

1942

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

The poster material also included strip cartoons, drawn by Mendoza, of a character called “Percy Vere.”¹⁸⁷ These posters show a hapless character, new to the workplace, being instructed in the best form of routine factory safety. The “Percy Vere” cartoon posters were displayed to complement the small books of “*Percy Verses*” that were distributed to workers. This was part of the RoSPA safety representative’s induction training for new factory personnel.¹⁸⁸

Figure 22 (p110) shows one of RoSPA comic posters. The posters have a series of six images on them and illustrate a theme addressed, in more abstract form, as part of the main poster campaign. It is probable that these posters were displayed in slightly different contexts from the other types of RoSPA material. Comic posters were also produced for display as part of the main campaign. One such poster by Harry Rowntree is reproduced as figure 25 (p124).

RoSPA advised that a Safety Committee structure be incorporated into the organisation of the workplace and that individual “Safety Officers” be appointed. The committee structure would help share the burden and responsibilities of the work.¹⁸⁹ At the beginning of the war, in 1939, statistical analysis had shown that industrial accidents could be classified

¹⁸⁷ Mendoza is most likely a pen name. No further information on the cartoonist has been traced. A record of an artist named Peter Mendoza has been traced as working for Imperial Chemical Industries during the 1940s.

¹⁸⁸ “*Percy Verses*” published by RoSPA, London, and illustrated by Mendoza, no date - in the collection of Paul & Karen Rennie. The RoSPA Archive does not include this pamphlet.

¹⁸⁹ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Safety Committee papers. Pamphlet “*Works Safety Organisation*,” (D.266/2/1).

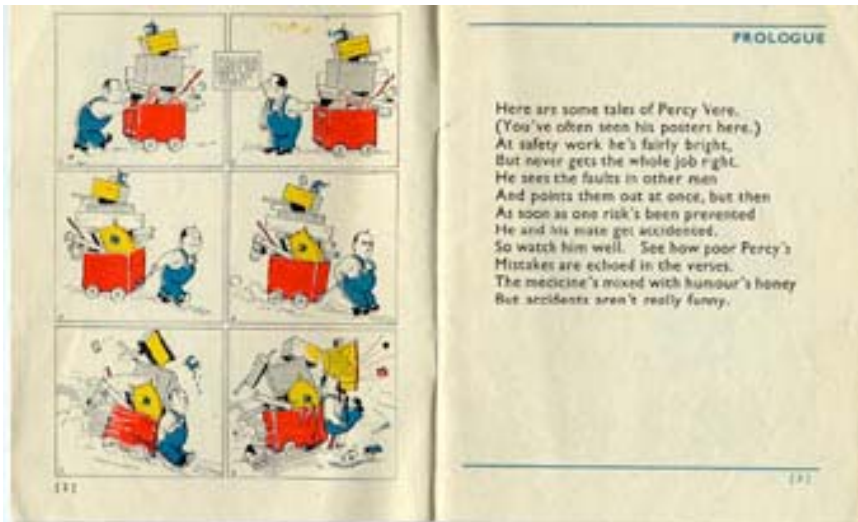


Figure 24. Inside page-spread from
"Percy's Verses"

1942

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

as one of two kinds, “21 percent to do with machinery, 79 percent non-machinery.”¹⁹⁰

The keeping of accurate records allowed trends to be plotted in an upward or downward direction. The Regional Safety Committee allowed a post-mortem, or forensic, analysis of why the accidents had occurred and provided a forum for how best to avoid a recurrence. This was usually achieved by the simple means of changing working practices or installing wire guards on machinery. The propaganda efforts of RoSPA, its literature, posters and pay-envelope stickers, were all aimed at modifying the behaviour of the workers and managers within industry.

RoSPA supported its poster production with the publication of discussion notes and guidelines for new members of the workforce. The adventures of Percy Vere were presented as part of a comic style poster campaign and also in the form of these small books of pictures and verses. One such book is illustrated as figures 23 and 24 (pages 118 and 120).

The small booklet includes the dedication

“To the prudence, pertinacity and

- may we say ? -

the perseverance of Percy Vere

and

to the efforts of his many admirers

to prevent accidents.

¹⁹⁰ Figures quoted by RoSPA but not collected by them. The figures were prepared by the Factories Inspectorate.

May their success be greater than his!"

And continues, in the "*Prologue*"

"Here are some tales of Percy Vere

(You've often seen his posters here)"

The beginning of WW2 in September 1939 provided the occasion by which a number of interests surrounding worker welfare were able to converge constructively. Against the backdrop of national emergency and patriotic effort it became possible for RoSPA, a hitherto politically neutral organisation, to collaborate with other more interested parties. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service, described the problem as, "deriving from the influx of new workers, that with others returning from unemployment and the urgent pressure of war conditions, make the workplace a more dangerous environment. Accordingly a particular duty devolves upon management to take even more care for the protection of workers in their charge."¹⁹¹

And he justified the costs of any such campaign as follows, "in the country's drive for victory production is of paramount importance and anything that can be done to prevent dislocation of factory working is worthwhile. The ultimate success of any scheme rests with the management of individual firms if the scheme succeeds in preventing

¹⁹¹ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Safety Committee papers (D.266/2/19). Ernest Bevin was appointed into the War Cabinet in May 1940 under Winston Churchill.

1pc of the accidents now occurring in industry, loss of production will be avoided and the money cost amply covered.”¹⁹²

RoSPA’s own view was expressed in a minute regarding the activities of the Society during wartime as, “on the industrial side, maximum production is necessary, with consequent speeding up and use of proportion of semi-skilled labour. Accident frequency rate is bound to increase, especially under restricted lighting conditions, and here too is a useful field for the association.”¹⁹³

In fact, the Society’s view very quickly became a matter of public policy, although not in exactly the way that had been intended. The status of the Society in September 1939 was as an independent lobbying group with limited funds and resources. So anxious were they about the potential costs of the increased work of accident prevention in war that they took, late in 1939, the decision to economise on the production of posters and in the making of films. Luckily, large areas of the Society’s work were co-opted, for the duration, into various war ministries and the propaganda output of the Society both assured and enlarged.

By November 1939 RoSPA had been in contact with the newly formed MOI who were reported as being “very interested” in the Society’s work

¹⁹² RoSPA Archive, Publicity Committee papers (D.266/5/6). Pamphlet entitled “*Works Safety in Wartime*.”

¹⁹³ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Safety Committee papers (D.266/2/19).



Figure 25. RoSPA poster by Harry Rowntree

"Think Twice Before You Risk an Accident

You Can't Fight a Machine"

c1943

Imperial War Museum

and experience.¹⁹⁴ By early 1940 an agreement between Bevin's Ministry of Labour and the Society had been reached whereby the Society was to be the service provider, at cost to the Ministry of Labour. In addition a further £400 per month was allowed to cover the Society's own expenses.¹⁹⁵

The outbreak of war was an uncertain time for the administrators of the NSFA. Their activities were likely to come under the twin pressures of increased demand and fewer resources. It seemed that the organisation could only survive these extra pressures by giving up some of its autonomy. The successful consolidation of RoSPA within Bevin's Ministry of Labour assured the Society of the resources and political support it required.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Labour and National Service quickly established a Publicity Arts Committee to compile a register of artists available for propaganda work. The Committee drew on information made available from a number of other organisations beyond the Ministry of Information. Amongst these was The Arts Bureau of Oxford (otherwise called The Arts Bureau for War Service) that had been established by the artist Paul Nash. The personal recommendation and artistic sensibilities of Nash (Modernist, Surrealist and intelligent) therefore inform the RoSPA campaign from the start. These influences are examined in Part two of the thesis.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁴ Reported in the *Minutes of the Executive Committee.* RoSPA Archive, Executive Committee papers (D.266/2/8).

¹⁹⁵ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Safety Committee papers (D.266/2/19).

¹⁹⁶ Gardiner (2004) p405



Figure 26. Factory first aid station in J Stone's of Deptford
c1942

From "*By Singleness of Purpose*" published by J Stone & Co
1945

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

Part One Section One – The Story of RoSPA

RoSPA During WW2

Under the agreement with the Ministry of Labour the printing of posters for RoSPA, as the major support of their propaganda campaign, was underwritten and assured. The work could therefore continue. The basic war service was provided on the following basis; a free pamphlet was distributed to member organisations along with the provision of a single “double crown” sized (20 x 30 inch) poster every week sent to subscribers in batches of four on the first Monday of every month. This was confirmed in a communication by T Goodall, Publicity officer of RoSPA, who reported that, “during the winter blackout campaign the Ministry had agreed to pay for the production and distribution of posters which had meant a display of more than a quarter of a million crown folio sized posters.”¹⁹⁷

“Crown folio” size was the standard 10 x 15 inches, which could easily be enlarged to the standard “double-crown” size format (20 x 30 inches) or the larger still sixteen-sheet display format (80 x 120 inches). For reasons of economy, in paper and inks, war posters were generally issued in “double-crown size or smaller.”¹⁹⁸ The Society aimed to provide and distribute 10,000 units of service to 6,000 industrial subscribers. Each unit of service comprised a set of 26 posters with supporting

¹⁹⁷ “*Minutes of the Publicity Committee.*” RoSPA Archive, Publicity Committee papers (D.266/2/1A).

¹⁹⁸ Cooper (1938) p30.

material supplied over six months. Each set of posters cost £1,450 with a further cost of £450 for distribution by post.¹⁹⁹

The intention was to display the posters in a prominent and visible location and for the safety officer appointed to change the posters as a matter of routine at the beginning of each week. The RoSPA magazine, published as the monthly "*Industrial Safety Bulletin*," underlined the value and success of the campaign. The distribution of pamphlets was assured on the basis of "one per 400 workers."²⁰⁰ The first publications were "*We Don't Want to Lose You*" and "*The Worker Safety Code – working in wartime and in the blackout*" that established, as a matter of primary importance, the essential features of any safety campaign.²⁰¹ In order to emphasise the importance of the message at a local level RoSPA aimed to co-opt the services of local paper reporting and of local Government officials. In order to maximise the impact of the campaign it was decided to suggest that, at least in the first instance, the 26 different posters - a supply of one a week for 6 months – should be put up at the rate of one a day for the first month and then re-used.²⁰²

The Industrial Service of RoSPA was based on the understanding that merely distributing propaganda material was unlikely to be effective. It was therefore recognised that key elements had to be put into place to assure the success of any campaign. The first of these was the support of management who had to be persuaded that the acceptance of

¹⁹⁹ "*Minutes of the Publicity Committee.*" RoSPA Archive, Publicity Committee papers (D.266/2/1A).

²⁰⁰ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Service papers (D.266/2/19).

²⁰¹ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Service papers (D.266/2/19).

²⁰² RoSPA Archive, Industrial Service papers (D.266/2/19).

responsibilities for safety and welfare were not merely an extra layer of costs to be borne by directors and shareholders. To this end Lord McGowan – the Chairman of RoSPA – was ceaseless in his articulation of the “sound business principles” that underlay the campaign for safety in the workplace. Lord McGowan was careful to link, “the significance of the working population as combatants with the financial benefits of uninterrupted production.”²⁰³

Having secured the agreement of management RoSPA then urged the appointment of a “Works Safety” representative through whom the campaign could be organised at a factory or workshop level. RoSPA were precise in their instructions that, in order to make the administrative burden of this responsibility less, the creation of a “Safety Committee” should be considered and, where possible, functions within the works delegated. This would allow for the creation of distinct role for the Safety Officer. This was outlined as concerning “training and instruction, inspection and liaison with management and with other factories.”²⁰⁴

The creation of these roles, with defined procedures and responsibilities, made the implementation and acceptance of safety issues more likely to succeed. Without this template for implementation RoSPA believed that neither owners, management nor workers were likely to pay anything but “lip-service” to the issue of safety as worker welfare. The committees also created a structured environment where progress could be “reported and noted.” The RoSPA literature and guidelines constantly reiterate the

²⁰³ RoSPA Archive, Executive Committee papers (D.266/2/8).

²⁰⁴ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Service papers (D.266/2/19).

need for a structured environment to encourage best practice. This was assured through the measuring and reporting of accidents. The reporting helped facilitate countermeasures to recurring accidents and accelerated the successful implementation of altered practices.

The various responsibilities represented on the Work's Safety Committee may be characterised as either internal or external. The external relationships were with the training and education elements within RoSPA and in the reporting of accidents. However, these roles were supported by the vital, internal, responsibilities of noting accidents, the frequency of the occurrence and identifying accident black spots in relation to practice, process or planning. The creation of an accurate ledger of accidents was, RoSPA argued, the first step in identifying the problem and its possible solution. This perception was calculated to appeal to the vocabulary and methods of industrial management by its implicit debt to "Taylorism;" the study of time, motion and productivity.²⁰⁵

A visible routine of inspection and investigation was then established so that all parties in the workplace could see, and appreciate, the scope of work of the Safety Committee. It should be remembered that, as Ernest Bevin realised, the state of industrial relations at the beginning of the war was very poor. The perceptions of the workforce were likely to be influenced by the unhappy experiences of the difficult economic circumstances of the 1930s and a deal of mistrust had to be overcome.

The most likely strategy to succeed in overcoming this was an open, fair

²⁰⁵ These were the principles of "Scientific Management" as described by Frederick Taylor in 1911. The doctrine of "Taylorism" has informed the development of organisations, both private and public, throughout the 20th century.

and explained policy. The safety inspections became an important part of building worker and management confidence in the usefulness of safety welfare. The visible interest of management in worker welfare was enshrined within Bevin's Ministry in the doctrine of "Human factor management."²⁰⁶

The beginnings of WW2 saw the frantic reorganisation of Britain's factories and workshops for the productive efforts of war and the provision of first aid stations as part of Air Raid Precautions (ARP). The first aid facilities of Stone and Co are shown in a contemporary photograph reproduced as figure 26 (p126).²⁰⁷ ARP facilities were established at the very beginning of the war. Often, it was discovered that they had been placed too far from the factory so that workers were injured trying to get to safety. Shelter from blast had to be provided near workstations. Also, the first aid posts were often required to provide help in response to industrial accidents. It was this unforeseen provision, and the surprising extent of it, which prompted RoSPA's increased propagandising.

Naturally, when accidents did occur a system of first aid provision was implemented followed by a forensic investigation into the possible causes of the incident. This investigation was recorded and these records form the basis of trend figures supplied by RoSPA to substantiate the success of their work. Where fatalities were recorded, the details of the accident were forwarded to the Regional Committee for discussion.

²⁰⁶ Summerfield (1984) p126 describes the Ministry policy as "human factor management."

²⁰⁷ Stone and Co were industrial engineers, based in South London, who developed and manufactured maritime and aviation equipment.

The geographical localisation of various industrial and manufacturing activities in Britain allowed for the exchange of information about accidents that were likely to be specific to certain processes and procedures in those industries. The RoSPA Regional Committee for Middlesborough (Teesside) became expert, because of the size and importance of the Imperial Chemical Industries works there, in accidents associated with that industry. It is not surprising therefore to find that the reports of that committee were circulated to representatives of other similar plants. The occurrence of fatal accidents was not only reported to the committee; the action taken and the benefit of it also had to be reported at a subsequent meeting. Accordingly, it was hoped that such accidents could be minimised if not avoided altogether.

The Industrial Service also suggested that most care should be taken with the appointment of educational and training officers within the works. These were amongst the first people that newly recruited, or after 1942 conscripted, workers met. RoSPA emphasised the importance of “first impressions” in establishing an effective culture of safety in the workshop. The job could most usefully be given, suggested RoSPA, “to an experienced man from the shop floor; a man with the respect of his fellows and one who was able to communicate easily with the new men at their level and in a way calculated to engage their interest.” RoSPA notes also lay stress on the value of demonstrations and group work within the first few days of familiarisation. The RoSPA project may be summarised as the successful creation of a working environment in

which safety and work were made a subject of vitally combined interest.²⁰⁸

The process of initiation into the workforce was therefore one in which RoSPA, along with management and Trades Unions had a substantial interest. Bevin had succeeded, by the appropriation of the RoSPA campaign in placing workers welfare at the forefront of what was, for most of the initiates after 1942, a new experience. Their expectations were therefore of a different kind to those whose view of industrial activity had been formed in the low-wage, low-expectation context of labour relations before 1939.

All the activities of the Industrial Service were calculated to place the work of safety officers and representatives into a structured routine – to create a workplace environment where safety and welfare were as much a part of the technocratic function of the industrial process as those of productivity and efficiency.

²⁰⁸ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Service papers (D.266/2/19).

Part One Section Two

RoSPA and Design

This section of the thesis looks at RoSPA's embrace of Modernist graphic design in its Industrial Service posters during WW2. This embrace is described in terms of the personalities behind the successful development of the campaign.

The guiding intelligence behind RoSPA's Industrial Service campaign is identified as Ernest Bevin. Bevin was one of the most substantial political figures in Britain during WW2. The industrial workers whose interests he represented held him in great respect and affection. Accordingly, he was able to mobilize their productive efforts and help supply the military with the equipment needed to secure victory.

Within the RoSPA organisation design issues were addressed by the Publicity Committee. The presence of Ashley Havinden and Francis Meynell on the Publicity Committee are testimony to the significance that RoSPA attached to their publicity efforts. Havinden and Meynell were both connected to the printing and design establishments. Indeed, both might be counted as significant figures in design reform in Britain during the 1930s. It is not surprising, therefore, that the RoSPA posters should seem so Modern.

Finally, the poster designers used by RoSPA during the war are introduced. Tom Eckersley is identified as the most prolific designer used by RoSPA. Tom Eckersley managed to combine his work as a designer for RoSPA with a job in RAF cartography through his particular method of “visualising” designs in his head rather than through working them out on paper. Eckersley’s designs are, in consequence, simple and economical and effective.

Tom Eckersley had first worked on safety themed communications, with Eric Lomers, as part of the NSFA’s ARP (Air Raid Precautions) campaign of 1939. The preparations for ARP were hastened after the Munich crisis of 1938. The poster by Eckersley Lomers was the first in the NSFA’s ARP series and co-incided with the mass issuing of gasmasks to the civilian population.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁹ ARP precautions and propaganda attracted many design progressives. The architectural group Tecton (founded by Berthold Lubetkin) published a series of guidelines for local authorities on the provision of deep shelters in 1939. The project engineer was Ove Arup and the drawings in the book were by the architectural perspectivist Gordon Cullen. Tecton and Cullen were also members of the MARS group of architects. Eckersley Lomers were, therefore, associated with the small group of progressive design Modernists in Britain before WW2. The poster is illustrated in Gardiner (2005).

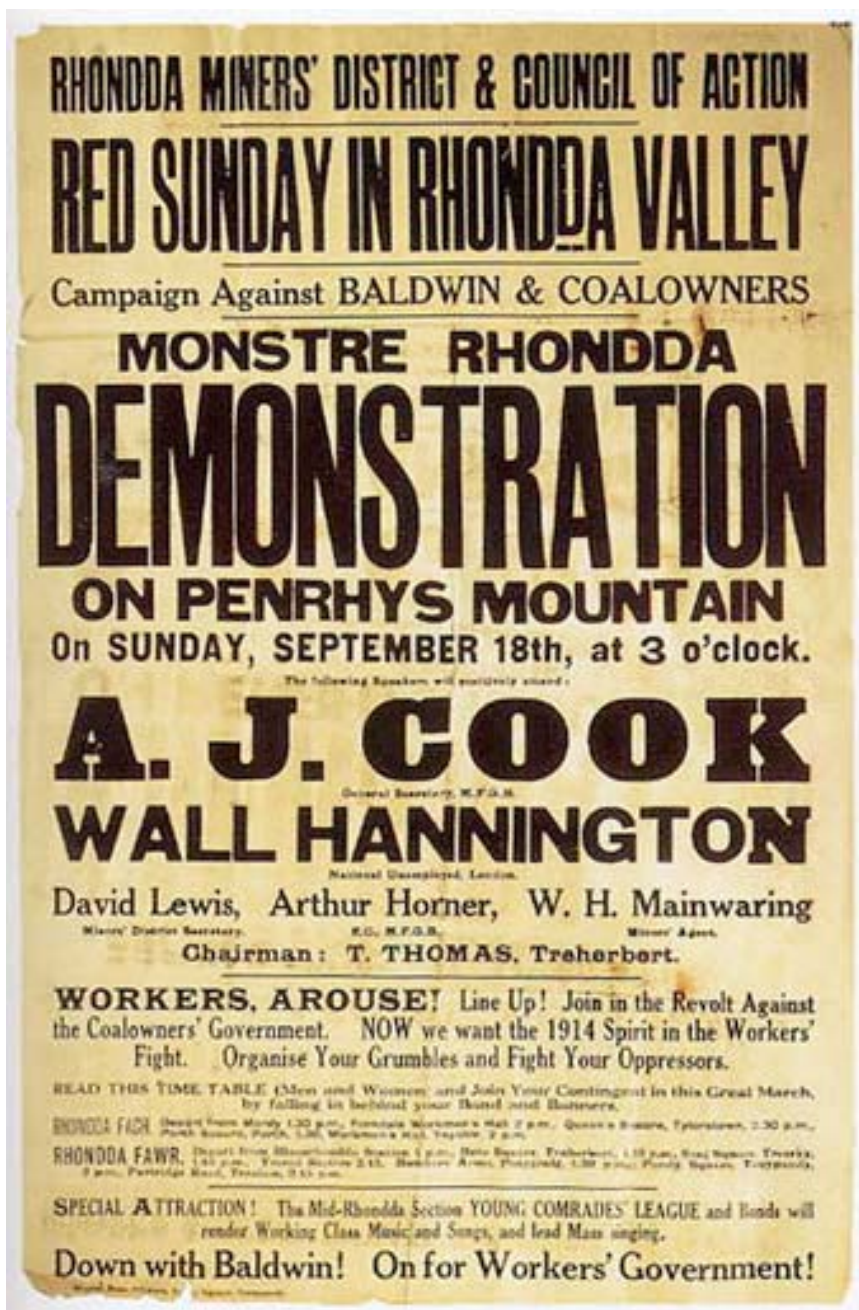


Figure 27. Trades Union letterpress poster

"Demonstration on Penrhys Mountain"

1927

University of Wales Swansea – South Wales Coalfield Collection

(Reproduced in Mace (1999) p83 plate 71)

RoSPA and Safety Posters

There are workshop notices prior to the RoSPA campaign; but these fall into very different categories of communication and cannot really be considered as safety or worker welfare posters. In Britain the byelaws and regulations attaching themselves to industrial practice – outlining the rights of ownership and the responsibilities of workers – were usually printed as letterpress posters with numbered paragraphs. These quasi-legal documents were related to the railway trackside notices published during the 19th century. They were usually a statement of the legal terms of ownership attaching themselves to land and plant along with an itemisation of the penalties for trespass or theft. These sorts of notice are distinguished by a lack of any engraved or pictorial element.²¹⁰

The iconography of worker solidarity found primary expression through the painted banners of the Trades Union movement. These were prepared with great skill and were paraded beyond the workplace as evidence of a worker fraternity. They also acted, in the military sense, as a standard and rallying point. These obvious differences in materials and function disqualify them as proper antecedents of the safety poster.

²¹⁰ There is an interesting parallel between the legalistic form of letterpress posters and the safety information provided through “official” channels before WW2. This literature, comprising a myriad of small booklets and pamphlets, is typically presented as sets of rules. The rules make no connection between behaviour and citizenship. Nor does their address use humour to make its communications more effective. See, for example, Home Office (1938) *Air Raid Precautions* and Fenton (1938). The contrast between these and the emerging form of communication pioneered by “Fougasse” (Bird (1940) and (1946)) could not be greater. See also Tecton Architects (1941) for a more visually sophisticated presentation of ARP with illustrations by Gordon Cullen.



Figure 28. USA workshop incentive poster by Mather, Chicago

"Let's Play to Win

Mistakes Delay the Work, Cost Us All Money and Hurt Your Standing

Alert Workers Avoid Fumbles"

1930s

John and Sandra Heller Collection

USA

Figure 27 (p136) shows a typical letterpress poster produced by the Trades Union movement before 1939. The style is typical of locally sourced letterpress printing.

In America, the Chicago based printing company of Mather produced, from about 1918 onwards, a series of workshop posters. These are typically directed at the “slacker” colleague. The messages suggest that an industrious performance and an ambitious outlook are the ways to assure an enterprise success. The Mather posters were a private initiative and are aimed at consolidating American values of enterprise. The surviving posters mostly date from the late 1920s and were published through to the early 1930s. They appear to have been motivated by a desire to counter the Communist propaganda and worker rights movement of the 1920s. They are not depression era posters and contrast with those produced under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) that were printed using the cheaper screen-printing processes rather than colour lithography.²¹¹ The message of the Mather posters is not a welfare message. It is that, “enterprise, initiative and good humour are the building blocks of profit.”

The success of the Mather poster project is difficult to judge. The circumstances of economic depression changed the working environment in the USA. The “New Deal” solution was of massive public investment in education, the arts and in the creation of a National

²¹¹ See De Noon (1987) pp126-127 for examples of WPA posters. The posters were produced in workshops for local distribution.



Figure 29. USA workshop incentive poster by Mather, Chicago

"Masks Off

A False Front Builds No Records – Earns No Rewards

Let's Be Real"

1930s

John and Sandra Heller Collection

USA

Insurance programme. The objectives of the “New Deal” were supported by a whole series of cultural initiatives organised by WPA. A series of posters was produced using screen print processes. Tellingly, it was the simple technology and short print-run potential of silk-screen that made it attractive to the artists and designers of the WPA who worked at a local level.

Figures 28 and 29 (pages 138 and 140) show a further two images from Mather and Co’s series of posters from America. The messages in the posters often express a narrative of personal emancipation through “getting ahead.” The messages of the Mather campaign confirm the prevailing ideology, in North America, of individual responsibility within the defined and hierarchical structure of the factory and workshop. The Mather posters contrast powerfully with the RoSPA posters that project an altogether more egalitarian feeling of fraternity and shared values amongst the work-force.

Letterpress traditions were established throughout the developed economies of the world but could only be used to produce broadside tracts and pamphlets. The creation of arresting visual images (propaganda) was almost impossible for those working towards a social and democratic project of emancipation especially outside the larger metropolitan areas. In Britain this was especially so. This may be explained by the fact that right up to 1939 the production of colour posters was, to a great extent, controlled by the relative lack of display space and the illegality of fly posting. The control of advertising space for

posters was both a commercial consideration and an aesthetic one. The cultural elite was also active in articulating their resistance to the idea of commerce and to the spread of advertising display boards.²¹²

The names of the Curwen and Baynard Presses feature regularly on the imprint of the posters throughout the 1930s. The relatively small number of printers available for this type of work was only one of the constraints that applied to Frank Pick's advertising campaign for London Transport, one of the largest organisations in Britain at the time. Equally problematic was the time taken to produce, by established craft processes, the posters themselves. It could easily take a year to produce a poster from commission to display. Clearly, the time delay in production and the lack of capacity in the lithographic printing industry were constraints that would hinder any propaganda campaign. The advent of WW2 therefore required a dramatic change in the printing industry and the RoSPA posters are evidence of that change. The fact that the RoSPA posters were printed by a single printer, Loxley brothers of Sheffield, and that they embrace mechanical reproduction for the purposes of speeding up the production of communications is evidence of a willingness to engage with both technological and organisational change.

It was noted during the war that the association of previous Conservative administrations with the economic inefficiencies and difficulties of the 1930s had led, in the popular imagination at least, "to the idea that their disregard for welfare had its origins in a form of heartlessness." This was

²¹² For an account of the development of the advertising display environment see Charles Newton in Timmers (1998) pp232-242.

repeated during the war when Conservative administrators and politicians routinely resisted improvements to the welfare conditions of service men. Later, “when pay and conditions were improved, it appeared to be as a result of pressure from the Left.”²¹³ The perception that industrial conditions were exploitative and that the industrial life was, therefore, unnatural has been a common theme in the articulation of national identity which has tended to emphasise the appeal of “a green and pleasant land” over the “*Pandæmonium*”²¹⁴ of industrial effort. George Orwell never considered the RoSPA posters specifically but his analysis of English national character help to locate the sentiments of the RoSPA campaign within a humane tradition of respect and tolerance for others. These values were extended, by legislation and by the impact of the RoSPA campaign, into the Social-Democratic project of post war reconstruction.

The RoSPA posters of WW2 were part of a decisive rupture with the craft traditions of printing that had dominated poster design for over 50 years. The shift towards a process of assembly in graphic design prepared the way for the development of a sophisticated visual language aimed at new audiences and that supported a new politics. Those politics are exemplified by the presence at the heart of the RoSPA campaign, of Ernest Bevin.

²¹³ Quoted in Marwick (1968) p290.

²¹⁴ “*Pandæmonium*” was also the name given to a project by filmmaker and poet Humphrey Jennings to collect texts associated with the industrial dystopia of 19C Britain. The word originally refers to Satan’s Kingdom and is used by Milton. The word therefore connects to the enduring image of “dark, satanic mills.”



Figure 30. Photographic portrait of Ernest Bevin
1945
National Portrait Gallery

Part One Section Two – RoSPA and Design

Ernest Bevin and RoSPA

Ernest Bevin was leader of the Transport and General Workers' Union (TGWU) from 1922 and had, from the modest beginnings of being a farm worker's son in Somerset, built up a formidable following as a charismatic Trade Union leader and public orator.²¹⁵ Throughout the 1930s Bevin pursued his policy of enlarging the membership of his Union by incorporating smaller societies and by recruiting new members. At the beginning of WW2 his TGWU vote was the most powerful in congress. Bevin himself was under no illusions about the importance of the task of establishing a powerfully productive base for the military-industrial organisation of the Home-Front.

He recognised the responsibilities that attached themselves, within this work, to both workers and management and foresaw that, come military victory, his members would find themselves in a very different world. As a consequence, Bevin was, from an early point in the preparations for war, engaged in an ideological struggle for the welfare of his workers. The war was recognised, by Bevin at least, as a traumatic but accelerating force for positive change. Accordingly, he was prepared to grasp the chance afforded him and work with Churchill in the War

²¹⁵ Ernest Bevin (1881-1951) was a key figure in the Trade Union movement during the 1920s and 30s. After WW2 he was one of the key personalities in Clement Attlee's Labour Government where he held ministerial office. Bullock (1960) and (1967) are the first two volumes, from three, of the authorised biography. Bevin had for a time been a Baptist lay preacher. See Hennessy (1992) p67 where reference is made to Bevin's tolerance and sympathetic values. Hennessy contrasts this with the austere Puritanical values that are sometimes associated with religious sectarianism. Bevin's "great task" was to extend the constituency of the Labour movement in Britain. This, he realised, would be best achieved through "laughter and fun" in addition to Churchill's "blood, sweat and tears."



Figure 31. Newspaper cartoon by David Low

1940

"All Behind You Winston" reproduced from Low (1941)

First published May 14th 1940 in London's *"Evening Standard"*

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

Cabinet. Arguably, Bevin was Churchill's most loyal colleague during the war.

Figure 31 (p146) shows David Low's famous cartoon of Churchill leading the War Cabinet. Behind Churchill is Ernest Bevin, leader of the Transport and General Workers Union and the most powerful member of the Labour movement. Bevin and Churchill formed an alliance in the War Cabinet that, prior to 1939, would have seemed unthinkable. The circumstances of war had, as Orwell had predicted, created the conditions in which a kind of national unity would flourish and be expressed as a sort of "War Socialism."²¹⁶ This should not be confused with normal politics. The war created conditions in which the normal tribal, and class, distinctions that informed British politics could be recast. Indeed, one of the most powerful signals that the creation of the War Cabinet sent out was that "normal politics had been suspended."²¹⁷

The Low image has become part of the folklore of "class solidarity" that characterises many accounts of the British Home-Front. The enduring mythology of "class solidarity" during WW2, epitomised perhaps by the newsreel footage of the King and Queen visiting the bombed ruins of London's East End, has tended to obscure the radical re-positioning of

²¹⁶ The term "War Socialism" has been described by the Austrian economist Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973) in relation to the German experience during WW1. He describes a transitory, or short-term, organisation of the economy so that the out-comes of private enterprise could be co-ordinated, or planned, to maximise the benefit to the socialised community in time of war. The temporary nature of "War Socialism" allowed for the ownership of means-of-production to remain unchanged. Mises suggested that the measures of "War Socialism" were unlikely to be reversed and that a post-war transitional economy would continue to accelerate the political and social movement towards full Socialism (the public ownership of the means of production). It should be noted that Mises viewed "War Socialism" with distaste and regarded its manifestation as a kind of political Trojan Horse.

²¹⁷ Lord Woolton quoted in Calder (1968) p99.

class interests implicit in the RoSPA posters, "*Picture Post*" and other wartime vehicles of propaganda. Angus Calder has explored these themes in "*The Myth of the Blitz*."²¹⁸

Bevin's strategy was pragmatic in the extreme. It was, simply, "to get more production." He realised that workers with a sense of grievance held up productivity and made bad workers but that they could also start trouble in a factory. Bevin therefore drew up a policy that combined his three long-standing concerns. The first was that wartime industrial relations should be built on co-operation with the Unions. The second was that a consultative committee framework should be established as the template of industrial negotiation at every level. This was an important continuation of his work, before the war, to establish joint negotiation into a system of industrial self-government. Thirdly, Bevin created a Factory and Welfare division within the Ministry. This was motivated by his belief that the right way to treat working people was not as so many units of skilled or unskilled manpower, but as individual human beings whose efficiency and willingness were affected by the conditions in which they worked and lived.²¹⁹ The RoSPA project was appropriated by Bevin's Ministry as a practical and visible support of these convictions.

²¹⁸ Calder (1991) pp20-43.

²¹⁹ Bevin described the Government's position to a conference of the National Joint Advisory Council soon after he had become Minister during May 1940, "We came to the conclusion that with the good will of the TUC and the Unions, and the Employers' Federation, a little less democracy and a little more trust in these difficulties, we could maintain to a very large extent intact the peacetime arrangements, merely adjusting them to suit these extraordinary circumstances." Quoted in Bullock (1967) p81. Summerfield (1984) pp123-147 describes this policy in relation to women workers.

Bevin's own experience of the difficult economic circumstances of the 1930s informed his policy. He had been struck by the way in which the manpower problem, one of oversupply, had been used as an excuse to drive the value of labour down. At the beginning of the war it was clear that the same tendency would, if unchecked, manifest itself again after the war, this time justified by the circumstances of national emergency.

Bevin's response was to turn the war into a force for the improvement of conditions and welfare and to, thereby, cement the working class into the proper fabric of English society. The war highlighted the problem of too many workers, with the wrong skills, being in the wrong place. Bevin realised there was, "no point in moving people about until the new factories were built." At this point the productive drive, to support the troops, could begin in earnest. "The correct matching, or co-ordination, of workers, resources and facilities, would provide the solution," Bevin suggested.²²⁰

The productive efforts of British workers were celebrated through publications, like the one illustrated in figure 32 (p150), published by the Ministry of Information. The messages communicated by these publications were much more like those of American propagandists and stressed the connection between the fighting line and the factory. Any slacking in the productive effort was identified as a form of collaboration with the enemy.

²²⁰ Described in detail in Bullock (1967) pp64-97.

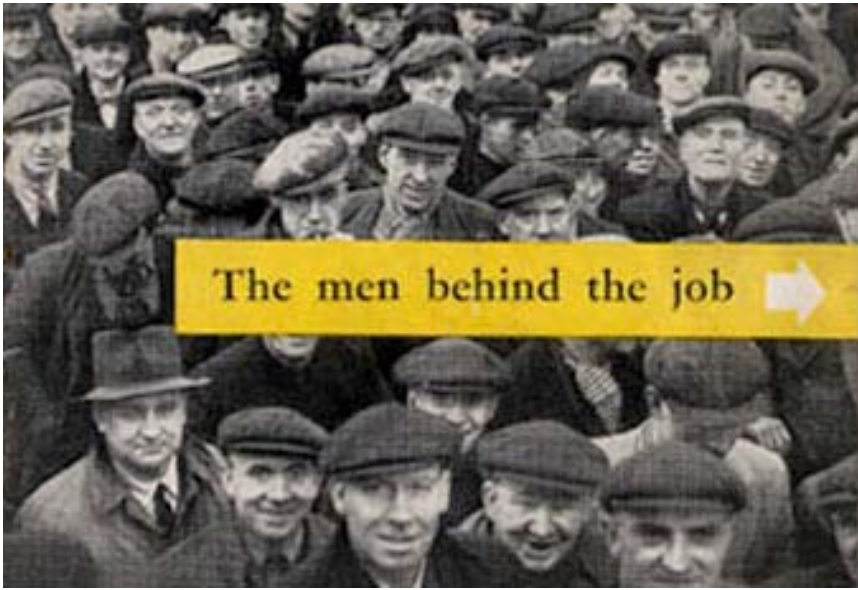


Figure 32. Cover of "The Men Behind the Job"
Brochure published by the Ministry of Information
1944
Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

The Welfare Division of Bevin's Ministry was placed under the directorship of Godfrey Ince (after Sir William Beveridge had declined the post) and its early creation allowed for it to come properly into its own when the more serious problems of labour supply and the war economy made themselves clear. These problems were, in large measure, and as Bevin had predicted, to do with aspects of the "labour supply problem."

Bevin had, early on, understood that the transition to war economy, with its specific output targets, would be a project requiring several phases of co-ordinated action. In the first instance, the war economy would grow by appropriating factories and workshops hitherto beyond the scope of war output. In the longer term, new factories would be required and more efficient and productive working practices developed. But it was pointless, in the first period of the war, to be worrying about shortages of labour in areas where there were insufficient raw materials to keep those workers busy.

The most important consequence of this was that when, as Bevin had anticipated, the shortage of labour became a problem and he was forced to conscript and make use of his compulsory powers in the allocation of workers, the welfare provisions that were then essential were already in place. These, typically, included the organisation of billets, hostels, transport and feeding arrangements in addition to the normal factory concerns of safety, rest and hygiene. Bevin gave strong personal support, including financial assistance, to the National Association of Girls' Clubs and, by the end of the war, had organised over fifty clubs for

women workers.²²¹ He also took an interest in BBC Radio programmes such as “*Music While You Work*” and “*Workers’ Playtime*.” By the end of 1942 the welfare officers at the Ministry’s Welfare Division were organising Entertainment’s National Service Association (ENSA) concerts at over a thousand factories – most of them once a week.

Figure 30 (p144) shows a photographic portrait of Ernest Bevin. The portrait dates from the very end of the war at a time when Bevin was a senior colleague to Winston Churchill in the War Cabinet. Bevin later became Foreign Secretary in Clement Attlee’s Labour administration. His Ministry can be said to have, through its concern for welfare, irrevocably altered the topography of the workplace. That his Ministry should have become a civilising agency is not entirely surprising for Bevin was a close friend of London Transport’s Frank Pick and had observed the substantial impact that Pick’s organisation had made on the lives of many thousands of Londoners throughout the 1930s.

Frank Pick’s life and career at London Transport are widely documented. Barman (1979) is the authorised biography and Green (2001) summarizes Pick’s achievements in relation to London Transport’s poster advertising campaign.²²² Frank Pick was much more than an advertising executive. Pick was born in Lincolnshire and grew up in York. In 1902 he joined the London and North Eastern Railway as a management trainee after qualifying as a solicitor. He became personal assistant to the

²²¹ Bullock (1967) p82.

²²² Green (2001) pp8-4.

General Manager, Sir George Gibb, and was taken with him when the latter was appointed Managing Director of the Underground Group in 1906. The Underground Group was an organisation formed from the disparate interests of the public transport schemes that had flourished in London during the 19th century.²²³

The history of London's Transport network is complex and beyond the immediate scope of this study. We need only note that by the time of Pick's appointment the railway interests had been co-ordinated into a single organisation and that, from 1907, they were under the guidance of the Anglo-American, Albert Stanley. Stanley, who later became Lord Ashfield, is credited with the unification of London's Transport services and infrastructure. In 1933 he oversaw the creation of the London Passenger Transport Board and was appointed its first Chairman. He and Pick were the closest of allies.

Stanley's genius was in the creation of a large and workable organisation. Pick's genius lay in the projection of that organisation to a wider public. Pick had accepted responsibility for the Underground Railway's publicity whilst working in the General Manager's office in 1908. Pick developed a publicity campaign that was co-ordinated and coherent in its content, display and style. He used poster images to extend the services offered by the Underground Railway to off-peak

²²³ The Metropolitan and District Lines were the first underground passenger railways in London. They were built to extend suburban services into the centre of the metropolis and, until 1890, used steam locomotives.

leisure travel and projected the service as a “life blood of the commerce, fun and community of the metropolis.”

The visual coherence of the campaign was further enhanced by the extension of clear design principles to the lettering used on the network²²⁴ and in the architectural design of the new stations, designed by Charles Holden, to serve the extensions to the Northern and Piccadilly Lines built during the 1920s and 30s.²²⁵ Pick’s intention was to develop a powerful visual identity for his organisation in every aspect of its design and to project that identity through association with values that went beyond the merely commercial. Green quotes Pick as recalling that his publicity was, “as much about the communication of information, values and goodwill as about securing passengers.”²²⁶

Niklaus Pevsner recalled, “that Frank Pick had made propaganda for the visual expression of honesty, harmony and order and was the greatest patron of his age.”²²⁷ Pick was exceptional in the breadth of his interests in design and this was reflected in his being a founder member of the Design and Industries Association (DIA) in 1915 and in his becoming President in 1932.²²⁸ Francis Meynell and Stanley Morison were also

²²⁴ Lettering commissioned by Pick from the lettering artist Edward Johnston (1872-1944) in 1916. Architecture commissioned from Charles Holden (1875-1960) who was born in Lancashire and trained in Manchester. In addition to the stations he designed for the Underground he also designed a new headquarters building at Broadway, London. The Underground station of St James’s serves the building directly. The building is famous for incorporating elements of Modern sculpture into its facades. There is work by Henry Moore, Jacob Epstein and Eric Gill included in the scheme.

²²⁵ Green (2001) p12.

²²⁶ Green (2001) p10.

²²⁷ Pevsner writing in the “*Architectural Review*,” 1941, in a tribute to Pick quoted in Green (2001) p10 and also p15.

²²⁸ Pick was later the first Chairman of the Council for Art and Industry, a forerunner of today’s Design Council.

members of the DIA during the 1930s and of the more specialised Double Crown Club that drew its members exclusively from printers, publishers and typographers.

Pick and Bevin had come to know each other through an industrial dispute involving the Central Area Bus Crew Committee who were recognised as a notoriously difficult group. They had succeeded, through their rapacity, in antagonising the head of both the London Passenger Transport Board, Lord Ashfield, and also that of the Transport and General Workers' Union. The Union's Secretary was Ernest Bevin. Ashfield sensed that beneath the great show of Bevin's loyalty to his members there lay a sense of disapproval at the tactics of the Committee. Ashfield gambled that Bevin would withdraw the Union support for the Committee in order to reduce, as he saw it, its negative, influence. Ashfield was right and the Committee were forced to withdraw their claim.²²⁹

Both Bevin and Pick came from Nonconformist backgrounds.²³⁰ Bevin had been a Baptist lay preacher in Bristol and Pick had grown up in York as part of that city's Methodist community and joined the Salem Chapel.²³¹ Both had been struck by their shared belief that Public organisations and their personnel could best be developed by a form of

²²⁹ The dispute is described, from Pick's point of view, in Barman (1979) pp158-9. It is worth noting that Bullock (1960) makes no mention of the meeting and subsequent friendship.

²³⁰ Neither were Quakers, although Pick married into the Quaker community. The Nonconformist values attached to the RoSPA campaign are taken, in this thesis, to be derived from the Quaker belief in an active engagement with society.

²³¹ Saler (1999) p32.

mutual support. The friendship between the two men is not, in spite of their different backgrounds, so surprising.²³²

Both men were trying to shape large organisations in ways that gave tangible form to the mid-century notions of public service, duty and administration. At the same time they were anxious to allow their organisations to develop beyond traditional lines of command. Both Pick and Bevin could see that, beyond a certain point, there was a marked tendency for organisations to atrophy. Both were concerned also with the notion that a monopoly provider need not be unethical – provided that the provider remained correctly motivated. These concerns, already being discussed in the mid 1930s, were to move into centre stage when, during 1941, Britain's War Cabinet began to look beyond the war and to give public expression to the legitimate war aims and ambitions of a "*Plan for Britain.*"

It is worth noting that, at the end of 1945, Duff Cooper recalled, "that Churchill was not interested in the subject of propaganda."²³³ It is certainly the case that the MOI's activities were the source of much wry amusement and also of suspicion during WW2. The writer Evelyn Waugh famously lampooned the Ministry, its activities and its personnel who were characterised as effete, "Oxbridge lightweights" in the pages of his "*Sword of Honour*" trilogy. Even those involved in the Ministry's own activities were, it seems, endlessly anxious about the relative success of

²³² Pick was an almost exact contemporary of John Bowes Morrell, Chairman of Loxley Brothers, and a key figure in the Yorkshire Liberal and Quaker circles.

²³³ Calder (1969) p509. Duff Cooper was appointed Minister of Information in May 1940.

their activities. The wartime journals of Harold Nicolson, for example, are full of references to establishment anxiety about morale on the Home-Front.

Churchill, by virtue of his upbringing, education and politics, viewed all propaganda with suspicion and was downright hostile to the attempts to sketch out a post-war agenda. Orwell, Priestley, Wintringham, the film documentarists and the RoSPA posters all contributed towards a climate of political opinion that transformed the terms of the post-war settlement. Neil Grant has documented the raising of political consciousness amidst the military education of conscript soldiers in relation to the publications of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs.²³⁴ The maps, plans, diagrams, posters and notes published by ABCA certainly helped to politicise the WW2 generation and were, in some ways, analogous to the RoSPA material presented to their colleagues working on the production front. It was no surprise then, that Bevin seized the chance to incorporate the activities of the Industrial Service of RoSPA into the Factory section of his Ministry of Labour and National Supply. The Road Safety and Education section was incorporated into the Ministry of Road Transport.

²³⁴ Grant (1984) pp171-187.

Part One Section Two – RoSPA and Design

The Publicity Committee

The Publicity Committee, based in London, oversaw the effectiveness of RoSPA's propaganda output. Their terms of reference were to guide and control publicity within the financial limitations laid down by the Management and Finance Committees. In addition they were to control the Society's exhibition policy, to advise on the Society's film policy, to review the work of the Society's operations division and to report to the executive on all of the above.²³⁵ The Committee was also encouraged to adopt a critical position in relation to the quality and success of RoSPA's propagandising.

The rapid expansion of the war economy would necessarily require a much-increased output of material from RoSPA. This had been acknowledged by the Society and the finance for this assured by the Ministry of Labour's intervention. The ambitions of RoSPA were to publish about one hundred new posters, "double crown or smaller," every year. These would be printed in increasingly large editions to serve the growing membership.

In order to keep pace with the increased level of activities it was decided that poster designs should be chosen by panel. The panel was initially made up of a RoSPA representative; Mr T Goodall and external experts

²³⁵ "Publicity Committee minutes," RoSPA Archive, Publicity Committee papers (D.266/2/1A).

including Mr Fleetwood Pritchard (Hon advisor to the Ministry of War Transport), and Mary Field; responsible for film-making activities. The Committee chose posters from, it seems, open submissions. This process, ad-hoc at best, was regularised by the addition to the panel, during 1941, of Ashley Havinden.

Havinden was a successful and experienced advertising executive and had helped establish the Crawford agency's Berlin office during the 1920s.²³⁶ He had therefore been exposed to the progressive design ideas of the Bauhaus and understood the new design to be both effective and economical. Under Havinden's guidance the panel gathered together a standing roster of experienced commercial artists and designers who could be called upon to design posters at regular intervals.²³⁷ The panel was further strengthened by the addition of Francis Meynell, publisher.

Francis Meynell was one of the most considerable figures in the revival of printing that occurred in Britain between the wars.²³⁸ Together with Oliver Simon and Stanley Morison he was responsible for the extending an Arts and Crafts sensibility beyond the private press movement and into the mainstream of commercial printing.²³⁹

²³⁶ Havinden's continental experience gave him a key role in the design establishment of the 1930s as a point of contact for designers entering Britain. The significance of Havinden's role, supported by both Hans Schleger and Edward McKnight Kauffer, has been described by Fiona MacCarthy in Schleger (2001) p15. Havinden worked in Berlin between 1927 and 1928.

²³⁷ The catalogue of RoSPA posters that is appended to this thesis includes an index of designers.

²³⁸ Francis Meynell (1891-1975). Meynell's contribution to the revival of fine printing during the 1930s has been told in Gilmour (1977) p26. The Meynell family were Quakers.

²³⁹ Oliver Simon (1895-1956) was a typographer, publisher and printer. Stanley Morison (1889-1967) was a typographer and consultant on newspaper design.

It is worth noting, at this point, that the legacy of the 19th century Arts and Crafts movement in Britain was problematic. William Morris and his printer at the Kelmscott Press, Sir Emery Walker, may be considered the founders of a revival in the artisan crafts of fine printing, binding and papermaking. These traditions were successfully revived through the production of limited edition and specially bound books. The problem for Meynell, Simon and Morison was that the qualities and attention to detail evident in this form of printing had made no impact in the more straightforwardly commercial world of “jobbing printing.”²⁴⁰

Meynell, Simon and Morison all hoped to improve standards of design in commercial printing. Simon was associated with Harold Curwen’s press in Plaistow and in the development of a more artistic form of lithography in illustration and graphic design.²⁴¹ Morison’s contribution was in his association with the Lanston Monotype Company, later called The Monotype Corporation, who were industrial manufacturers of printing and typesetting machines. His special interest was in the printing of newspapers and the typographic conventions governing their legibility, clarity and design.

Meynell was both polemicist and publisher. His arguments for good design in commercial printing were made both in the articulation of his beliefs and through their representation on the page. His publishing

²⁴⁰ The term “jobbing” describes the output of a general printing works comprising leaflets, letterpress posters, labels and stationery.

²⁴¹ Simon (1956) p12 describes the beginnings of the association between Curwen and Simon.

house, the Nonesuch Press, managed to combine careful printing with machine setting so as to produce new standards of value in printing.

Meynell's commitment to machine printing was based on a belief that the artisan traditions of the print workshop would be liberated by the use of machines. Accordingly, he along with Curwen and Simon was at the forefront of a movement to emphasise the artistic potential of lithography at precisely the same moment that technical advances in make-ready processes were allowing for a speedier and more exact, or less intuitive, photo-mechanical make-ready. Thus were the precepts of an earlier design reform eventually extended to a wider community through the proper use of industrial machinery and process in commercial printing.

Meynell's autobiography, published in 1971, makes no mention of RoSPA and makes only two fleeting references to Ashley Havinden at Crawford's Agency.²⁴² The presence of both Havinden and Meynell on the RoSPA Publicity Committee is testimony of RoSPA's commitment to good design effective communications and to good printing in the production of their industrial propaganda.

The Publicity Committee also took an interest in the effective display of their material. It was quickly realised that each workplace should try to create a more-or-less permanent state of display material. This involved the creation of display environments within the works where a changing series of posters could be displayed. It was felt important that specific

²⁴² Meynell (1971) p213.

sites should be created so that their maintenance could be effectively monitored. Also, it was felt that such displays, by virtue of their being thought out and co-ordinated, would be more effective than an ad-hoc display of material wherever space allowed. Thus was the publicity material cemented into the fabric of the works buildings.

The records that survive from this period are incomplete and it is difficult to account exactly for the development of the RoSPA campaign. However the financial accounts of the Society record payments to designers and artists and it is, therefore, possible to establish a list of the artists used and the frequency with which they were employed. Among the first names that appear, in 1939, are those of Abram Games.²⁴³ Later, those of Tom Eckersley and Eric Lombers appear.²⁴⁴

Eckersley and Lombers was a design partnership that had been formed, early in the 1930s, between friends at Salford School of Art (Manchester) before their move to London. Speaking in 1996 Tom Eckersley recalled that he had worked with Eric Lombers throughout the 1930s and that it was the outbreak of war that caused the association to split.²⁴⁵ A brief attempt to reform the partnership was made in 1945 but was

²⁴³ Abram Games (1914-1996) is probably the most widely known of British poster designers of WW2. Games (1960) is still the best published source on his working methods. Games (2003) contextualises the career achievements of Abram Games.

²⁴⁴ Tom Eckersley is represented in the major dictionaries of designers such as Livingston (1992) and Hollis (1994). No detailed account of his work has been published as yet. Exhibitions of Eckersley's work have been held at the Camden Arts Centre in 1980 and at the University of the Arts, London. See also Eckersley (1954) for his own account of poster design. Eric Lombers was the business partner of Tom Eckersley during the 1930s. No published references to Lombers exist.

²⁴⁵ Rennie (1994) in *"Affiche,"* Number 12, p66.

unsuccessful. Tom Eckersley's name, as an individual, is listed in the accounts on a regular basis throughout the war.²⁴⁶

Havinden's contacts within the commercial art environment and his interest in progressive design gave him the chance to use artists and designers overlooked by the more mainstream creative directors of the MOI. The roll call of designers listed and credited in the Society's accounts includes the names of Hans Schleger,²⁴⁷ Arnold Rothholz,²⁴⁸ Manfred Reiss²⁴⁹ and those also of Jan Lewitt and George Him.²⁵⁰ All of these designers had established themselves in Europe and would have been known to Havinden from his days in Berlin and at Crawford's office in London. Abram Games was second generation Anglo-Jewry and Tom Eckersley was, as mentioned earlier, from a Lancashire working class background. The creative talent chosen by Havinden and used by RoSPA may therefore be characterised as relative outsiders to the metropolitan and commercial establishment preferred by the MOI.

Havinden recalled that, from the 1920s onwards, he had been impressed, "by the dynamic potential of graphic communication to project effectively." This was especially true where the prevailing context was one of static and uninspired communication. The factory context of

²⁴⁶ RoSPA Archive, Finance Committee papers (D.266/2/9).

Working relations between RoSPA and Tom Eckersley were further strengthened, after WW2, by the appointment of Tom Eckersley to the Publicity Committee. Havinden's relationship with Eckersley continued through Havinden's role as Creative Director at Crawford's advertising agency during the late 1940s and following Havinden's appointment as a Governor of the London College of Printing in 1950. Tom Eckersley joined the teaching staff at LCP and rose to become head of the newly established School of Graphic Design.

²⁴⁷ Schleger (2001) is the main published source of the life and work of Hans Schleger (1898-1976).

²⁴⁸ No published references on Arnold Rothholz have been traced except for his inclusion in the story of GPO poster design told by Barden (1993).

²⁴⁹ Manfred Reiss (died 1987) is included in Barden (1993).

²⁵⁰ The work of Lewitt-Him was featured in "Graphis," 14 (1946), p200.

RoSPA's official communications must have struck Havinden as the ideal combination in which to try out these new and dynamic design effects.²⁵¹

The efforts of Havinden in securing a foot-hold for émigré designers is evidence that, whatever the difficulties of the wartime environment, Britain could welcome refugees from Europe and embrace new ideas. Stylistic experimentation in graphic design would have counted for nothing if it had not also been both economical and effective.

The economics of visual communications, founded on the use of the most up-to-date printing technology and the ruthless simplifications of the design brief, allowed RoSPA to circulate ever-increasing numbers of posters within the industrial community. This activity was continued after the war until various factors conspired, from about 1955 onwards, to make such material increasingly redundant.

The first was that the role of RoSPA was transformed by factory safety policy that effectively confirmed RoSPA's agenda through legislation. The second was that the poster became superseded by a more elaborate variety of training materials that grew to include films, television and video. By far the most significant factor in the diminished significance of industrial safety was the steady transformation of the working environment from heavy industry to serviced office. By the late 1970s the subscriber base for the Industrial service had all but disappeared. This reflected the steady decline of Britain's heavy industry and its replacement with, first, a service economy and, secondly, a creative

²⁵¹ Havinden quoted in Hollis and included in National Galleries of Scotland catalogue (2003) p36.

economy. Accordingly, it is fair to say that, within this context, the safety poster simply disappeared from view.²⁵²

Notwithstanding the transformations of British industry, the RoSPA posters from WW2 and the immediate post-war period can be identified as significant elements within the technocratic development of both industrial management and of the management of a nascent creative economy.

Lord McGowan described its campaign's effectiveness, within the industrial context, thus, "one of our largest divisions, whose products are of vital importance to the war and in which the number of employees rose approximately from 15,000 to 45,000, achieved successive diminutions in its accident rate throughout the war years to a total of 35pc. In a heavy chemical factory an entirely accident free record of more than 2,000,000 (two million) man-hours was achieved, and in a light munitions components factory, almost entirely staffed by women and girls, a period of more than 1,000,000 hours (one million) without an accident of any kind."²⁵³

The efforts of the Publicity Committee did two things. The first was to establish a structured commissioning environment for designers working with the organisation. This was done without reference to the particular style of work produced. The second was, by imposing cost and technical constraints on the campaign, to effectively select certain kinds of design

²⁵² RoSPA's Industrial Service is now part of their Occupational Health and Safety service.

²⁵³ RoSPA Archive, Industrial Service papers (D.266/2/19).

solution to their particular problems. This tendency was further exemplified by a willingness, on Havinden's part, to embrace designers whose work drew on the design vocabulary of mid-European modernism before the war.

The success of the RoSPA campaign, from every perspective, revealed some weaknesses in the original organisation of the Society. An unofficial report into the future of the society was prepared internally during 1944/5 and revealed that the success of the industrial campaigns would, when the war ended, require the Society to reorganise itself to reflect this. Accordingly, the importance accorded to road safety within the organisation would have to be diminished and this would be, with the existing personnel at headquarters, very difficult to achieve. The report noted that the administrative cadre of the Society reflected the pre-war concern for road safety and was made up, for the most part, from military personnel who reflected the class positions of road users in the 1930s.²⁵⁴ The continuing use of military titles was noted, in the report, "as disruptive."²⁵⁵

A P Young drafted the report for internal circulation within RoSPA. It identified a longstanding tension between the activities of Road Safety Committee and those of the Industrial Service Section. This tension arose as much out of poor teamwork and training within the organisation as from an antipathy between Colonel Pickard, Chair of Road Safety, and

²⁵⁴ RoSPA Archive, unpublished manuscript report by A P Young, Industrial Service papers (D.266/3/2/22).

²⁵⁵ RoSPA Archive, unpublished manuscript report by A P Young, Industrial Service papers (D.266/3/2/22).

H G Winbolt, director of the Industrial Service. The presence of Helen Sutherland, longstanding secretary of RoSPA and Personal Assistant to Colonel Pickard, on many of the committees was also seen as likely to resist the required evolution in thinking, organisation and activity.

The changed circumstances of post-war Britain would require not just a different emphasis, but also a different tone. In 1941 George Orwell had been able to state that, “the English revolution has begun.”²⁵⁶ By 1945 the structures for a very different way of thinking and working were in place. The new structures reflected a belief in command and planning as organising principles within the economy and reflected new political reality.

²⁵⁶ Orwell (1941) p87.



Figure 33. Black and white photographic negative from the Lund Humphries Studio, London

"Be On Guard" by Edward McKnight Kauffer

1936

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

RoSPA and poster design

The final element in this second section is concerned with examining the changing role of design within the context of war. This is exemplified by the RoSPA campaign that is distinguished from its design antecedents by its use of mechanical reproduction.

The embrace of modern technology and processes of graphic reproduction were a necessary condition for the success of RoSPA's industrial propaganda. The use of technology also allowed this propaganda to conform to Walter Benjamin's criteria for a properly engaged and progressive form of cultural production.

Poster Design During the 1930s

Hans Schleger had come to Britain, from Germany, during 1932. He had been working in the Berlin office of the advertising agency Crawford's where he had come into contact with both Ashley Havinden and the American poster designer Edward McKnight Kauffer. Both these contacts were able to facilitate his integration into the London design scene and to introduce him to potential clients. Indeed, Schleger and Kauffer were neighbours at Swan Court, Chelsea. Both were part of what Fiona MacCarthy has called, "a social life that networked its way through the London artistic and intellectual avant-garde."²⁵⁷

One of Hans Schleger's first commissions in England was to design a poster and exhibition display for RoSPA's predecessor, the LSFA, addressing the theme of road safety.²⁵⁸ Havinden described Schleger's poster for "*Safety Week*" thus, "this picture is Surrealist in that the imposition of eyes and ears for heads underlies the necessity for super-awareness on the part of pedestrians in traffic." He continued that, "such an unusual idea brings an interest and curiosity appeal into a subject which would otherwise make dull poster material." Before concluding in relation to the exhibition, "that the designer clarifies by simple visual analysis an abstract notion of behaviour."²⁵⁹

²⁵⁷ MacCarthy in Schleger (2001) p15.

²⁵⁸ Illustrated as figure 20 (p106).

²⁵⁹ Quoted in Schleger (2001) p41.

The exhibition was an enormous popular success attracting many thousands of visitors. The public took home over 40,000 copies of the newly published "*Highway Code*." The association, forged at Crawford's, between Havinden, Kauffer and Schleger helped to redirect the efforts of the advertising industry into areas previously ignored by them as non-commercial. The "*Road Safety*" exhibition and its supporting propaganda were a new kind of public information made available by new and exciting means. The exhibition was a particularly effective form of public address before the advent of widespread television ownership.

The interaction of this network of designers with the NSFA also indicates that the administrators of the NSFA were conscious of the potential of graphic design to propagandise their cause.

The association between LFSA and the American designer Edward McKnight Kauffer is further evidence of an opportunity, afforded by RoSPA's predecessor, for the development of a visually sophisticated form of communication design. Figure 33 (p168) shows a detail from a photographic negative of a poster project by Kauffer for a "Safety Week" campaign "*Be On Guard*." Haworth Booth (1979) contains a checklist of published work by Kauffer and there is no mention of this design so that it is unclear whether it was ever used. The RoSPA Archive makes no reference to any material by Kauffer but the existence of this photographic evidence suggests that Kauffer was working on a project for RoSPA just as war was about to break out.



Figure 34. Shell poster by Edward McKnight Kauffer

"Stonehenge"

1932

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

The photographic negative came to light amongst a quantity of negatives saved from the Lund Humphries studio in London. A former employee saved them when the firm moved from the premises. The negatives were mostly studio copy shots of posters and art works by Kauffer but there was also material relating to road safety in the form of photographs of children in streets and amongst traffic. These were, presumably, part of Kauffer's experiments towards the production of visual propaganda for the LFSA.²⁶⁰

Kauffer was one of the great poster designers of the inter-war period in Britain. He was involved in the poster campaigns of both London Transport and Shell-Mex and BP Ltd where his relations with Frank Pick and Jack Beddington were close and of long standing. Kauffer had dedicated his *"Art of the Poster"* (1924) to Frank Pick. Jack Beddington was a more urbane character than Pick. Richard Guyatt who was employed by Beddington as a young artist recalled that, "Beddington was like a wizard," and that his personality was "warm and buoyant whilst being practical."²⁶¹ Kauffer and Beddington developed a working relationship that developed into friendship and which lasted until Kauffer's departure from Britain in 1939. The 1930s was a period of relentless experimentation for Kauffer who produced posters, mostly under the patronage of Beddington and Pick, in a wide variety of styles.

²⁶⁰ The collection of negatives was offered for sale to various institutional collections in Britain. It failed to find a buyer and was taken to America where it was sold.

²⁶¹ Haworth Booth (1979) p70. Jack Beddington (1893-1959)



Figure 35. Shell poster by Edward McKnight Kauffer

"Magicians Prefer Shell"

1934

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

These relations, along with Kauffer's body of work placed him at the centre of London's design establishment. Kauffer had pioneered a sophisticated and artistically driven poster style that incorporated elements from the major artistic movements of Paris. His own work from the 1930s embraces elements of the painterly avant-garde, a taste for English Neoromanticism in its nascent form and a highly developed appreciation of the typographic and montage experiments of the German, Russian and Swiss designers.

Figure 34 (p172) shows one of the famous "*Landmark*" series of posters for Shell in which Kauffer has produced a marvellously monumental and dark image of Stonehenge. The ancient stone circles of Stonehenge and Avebury were rediscovered by a generation of English artists who were impressed by the idea that landscape could be represented emotionally as well as topographically. The Shell poster campaign with its focus on historic features of the English landscape and with its wide variety of artists and styles was a powerful vehicle for presenting these ideas at a more populist level. The artists Paul Nash, John Piper, Graham Sutherland and Edward Bawden were all, along with Kauffer, involved in the production of posters and illustrated guides for Shell.²⁶²

A second series of Shell posters, called "*Conchophiles*" drew inspiration from the rather more abstract notion of Shell "users." Kauffer's

²⁶² The history of Shell's advertising campaign and travel guide publishing was presented in an exhibition at London's Barbican Gallery (1983) and by Hewitt (1998).



Figure 36. Shell poster by Edward McKnight Kauffer

"Actors Prefer Shell"

1933

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

contributions to this series are amongst the most significant poster designs of the period anywhere in the world. Their significance is twofold. Firstly, they seek to incorporate the sophisticated values of the fine arts into the visual language of advertising and secondly, they are scrupulous in their refusal to show any trademark associated with the product. The posters are therefore at the forefront of the development of an allusive, or values driven, visual language in advertising. Figures 35 and 36 (pages 174 and 176) show two of Kauffer's contributions to this series.

It is important to remember that, notwithstanding their artistic experimentation, these posters could never conform to Benjamin's criteria for Modern cultural production, because the circumstances of their making relied on the craft traditions of lithographic printing from stone.

Jack Beddington was a member of the Design and Industries Association. The DIA claimed that the interests of advertisers would be best served by a disciplined and tasteful display of advertising material. Consequently the Shell posters were displayed in the relatively limited confines of Shell's own garages and on the sides of their fleet of flatbed delivery lorries. The cautious display of these posters would further undermine their potential Modernist status according to Benjamin.

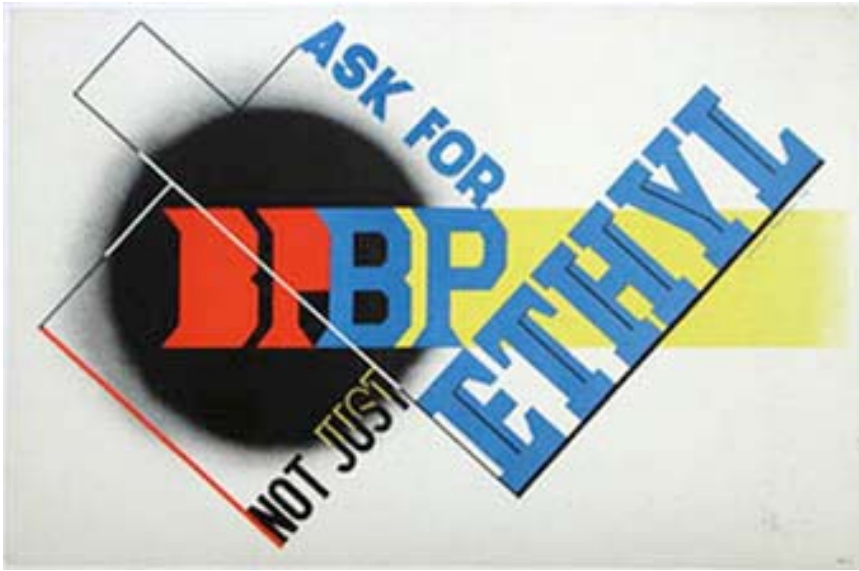


Figure 37. BP poster by Edward McKnight Kauffer

"Ask for BP Ethyl Not Just Ethyl"

1933

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

The Shell posters seem to have been printed, in the main, by the specialist art printers J Weiner and Son of London. Weiner's were a firm of art printers who normally produced lithographic reproductions of paintings that required complex colour separations that were drawn by hand and required multiple printings. Accordingly, Kauffer's posters for them were all printed using the artisan skills of stone lithography.

Figure 36 (p176) shows a poster designed by Kauffer and printed by Weiner and Co. The artistic influences are derived from the cubist avant-garde in Paris. The poster shows an actor holding a mask to his face. The mask is represented as a rectangle of white paper showing through and also represents the text from which actors work. Kauffer had visited Paris, as a student from America in 1913, and been introduced to Matisse, Derain, Vlaminck and Chagall.²⁶³ It was these influences that informed his style in poster design throughout the 1920s and 30s.

The Shell campaign allowed Kauffer a good deal of space for experimentation and there are examples of typographic compression as in figure 37 (p178) and a concern, from about 1935 onwards, of how best to achieve an integration of photographic elements into the visual language of poster design. Figure 38 (p180) is typical of Kauffer's efforts to contextualise photographic elements within an artistic style of poster design.

²⁶³ Recalled in Haworth-Booth (1979) p15. The connection with the Parisian avant-garde distinguished Kauffer from his English contemporaries.

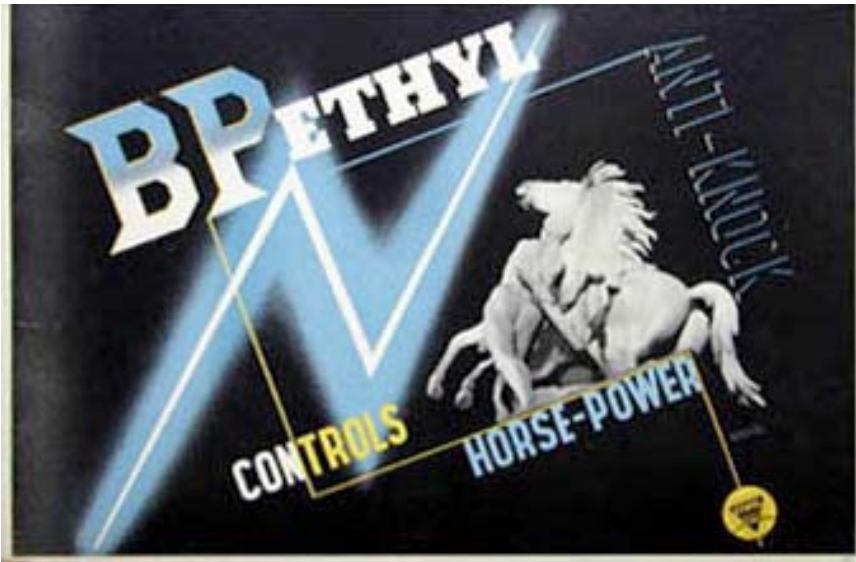


Figure 38. BP poster by Edward McKnight Kauffer

"BP Ethyl Anti-Knock Controls Horse-Power"

1934

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

The BP poster shows very clearly the problems faced by poster designers during the 1930s when they attempted to use photographic elements in their design. The limits of half-tone technologies were such that the only relatively small areas of the poster could be given over to photographic representation. The photographic element in this poster represents about 25 percent of the total area of the design that measures 30 by 45 inches. The exact circumstances of the printing of these posters are unclear.

The Shell campaign was also a joint marketing venture with BP although the input from BP seems to have been minimal. The poster in figure 37 (p178), for example, has not been included in the published accounts of the campaign such as the exhibition catalogue from the Barbican Art Gallery (1982) or those by Bernstein (1995) or Hewitt (1998). These graphic antecedents are evidence of how graphic designers were working towards a modernist integration of image, text and photography in poster design during the later 1930s.

The personalities associated with these experiments were known to RoSPA. Indeed the design work commissioned by RoSPA's predecessors is revealed as sympathetic to Modernism through the use of Hans Schlegel's designs and the association with Kauffer. The quality of RoSPA's wartime propaganda may be explained by appeal to these antecedents.



Figure 39. Frontispiece self-portrait of Tom Eckersley
From *"Poster Design"* by Tom Eckersley
1954
Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

Tom Eckersley and the RoSPA Designers

Tom Eckersley was RoSPA's main designer, for the Industrial Service, during WW2. No industrial propaganda seems to have been produced by RoSPA before the outbreak of WW2. Indeed, the production of large scale quantities of industrial propaganda only begin, after mid 1940, when the financial security of the organisation was underwritten by the involvement of the Ministry of Labour and National Supply under Ernest Bevin. Thereafter, RoSPA produced a steady flow of posters and books.

Tom Eckersley was born in Salford in 1914. After attending art school he began work, in partnership with Eric Lombers, in commercial art. They moved to London and designed their first poster for London Transport in 1935. By the end of the 1930s the partnership was firmly established and had produced work for London Transport, Shell-Mex and BP Ltd and for the GPO amongst others.

The Eckersley-Lombers partnership produced some remarkable poster images during the 1930s. One of their posters features a photographic element – a glove – as emblematic of winter. This poster, designed to remind motorists to change over to “Winter Shell” dates from 1938.²⁶⁴ This was the first use of photography in Shell poster publicity of the 1930s. The scale of the poster and the size of the photographic element make this a bravura piece of graphic design and amongst the first

²⁶⁴ Included in the exhibition *“The Thirties”* (1979) p213 (16.13).

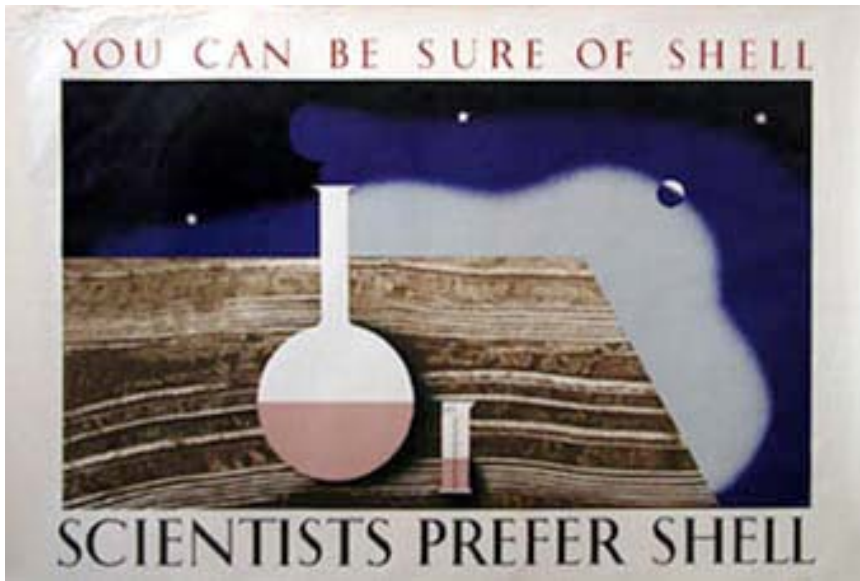


Figure 40. Poster for Shell Mex and BP Ltd *"Conchophiles"* series

"Scientists Prefer Shell"

By Tom Eckersley and Eric Lombers

1936

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

successful uses of photography in poster design. The Eckersley-Lombers material is typical of the 1930s commercial art in its design and craft printing. It can be characterised by the use of airbrush effects, the very limited use of photography and the need for many complicated and separate colour printings.

Tom Eckersley was not a self-publicist. There are relatively few photographs of him from before 1980. This bright and cheerful self-portrait reproduced as figure 39 (p182), doubles as a colour chart and is taken from his *"Poster Design"* published in 1954.

The Shell poster illustrated figure 40 (p184) was designed in 1936. It is part of Shell's *"Conchophiles"* series and the image is emblematic of physics, chemistry, geology and astronomy. The poster was printed using stone lithography and the blue-black night sky is remarkable for the velvety quality of its printing. Eckersley recalled that the effects of strata in the rock formation were created with a cardboard comb that scraped across the ink.²⁶⁵ The RoSPA campaign gave Tom Eckersley an opportunity to work alone and with a method that was very different from that of the 1930s.

There is no straightforward way to reduce the number of colour printings required to produce a poster design from stone lithography except to use

²⁶⁵ Recalled in conversation with the author and quoted by Rennie (1994) in *"Affiche,"* Number 12, p65.



Figure 41. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Broken Rungs Cause Broken Limbs

Examine Ladders Before Use"

1943

Eckersley Archive LCC

fewer colours. During the 1930s, a surprising amount of advertising lithography was carried out using craft traditions and skills dating back, more-or-less, to the invention of lithography itself. Skilled lithographic artists drew out the colour separations by hand. The preparation time for this type of work often ran into weeks, if not months, and was quite unsuitable for the rapid turnarounds required by modern communications. This was especially true in the urgent circumstances of war.

The industry resistance to technical advance can only be explained by reference to the prevailing economy of advertising in Britain during the 1930s. The chief characteristic of the British advertising scene during the 1930s was its strict control. Advertising space was regulated and limited – accordingly, posters were produced to make the best use of that space. Railway advertising, for example, was developed using a collaborative model involving the railway company, printer and resort. The resort would pay the printing costs and the railway company would display the poster. The printer would produce excellent work, far above what might be commercially viable, secure that his costs would be met, and treat the resulting image as an advertisement for himself. These uncommercial relations were further complicated by the fact that print-runs of posters were, throughout the 1930s, quite short and a reflection of the limited display space available.



Figure 42. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Take the Right Steps"

1943

Eckersley Archive LCC

Within such a framework the entry price of poster advertising was very high. RoSPA's strategy was to display their posters in new kinds of social space developed around town halls and works social centres. The advent of WW2 would speed up the process, within the industry, of moving towards a lower cost printing economy – one that made short-run printing economical. Diminishing the craft of the process and embracing mechanical reproduction helped achieve this.²⁶⁶

The beginnings of WW2, from September 1939, were difficult times for RoSPA and for its designers, especially those who were not British nationals. In the late 1930s RoSPA had made use of Kauffer and Schleger to help design their road safety campaigns. Kauffer was an American national and Schleger was still a German national.

Kauffer and his wife Marion Dorn, the textile designer, left for America after misunderstanding the tone of address to foreign nationals in Britain. Haworth Booth has described the misunderstanding and the difficulties of Kauffer's position as "tragic."²⁶⁷ Peter Gregory, a director of Percy Lund Humphries, the printing firm based in London and Bradford, recalled that, "the American Ambassador issued an intimation that the SS Washington would probably be the last boat to take back American citizens and that those who remained would become liabilities: so there was practically no alternative but for them to go."²⁶⁸ Kauffer had remained an American

²⁶⁶ For a detailed explanation of the craft skills in poster printing during the 1930s see Paul Rennie (2000) "*Craft Skills in Colour Printing*" included in the "*Decorative Arts Society Journal*."

²⁶⁷ Mark Haworth Booth (1979) p82.

²⁶⁸ Gregory quoted in Haworth Booth p82.



Figure 43. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Replace Covers Prevent Falls"

1941

Eckersley Archive LCC

citizen whilst his friend T S Eliot had become naturalised. Kauffer's American citizenship assured him of "alien status" and resulted in his being subject to "petty, misapplied regulations governing his movements."²⁶⁹ This, in addition to the Ministry's "lack of intelligence" and the difficulties of earning a living as an American alien, compelled Kauffer to leave.

The difficulties faced by Kauffer as an alien must have been even greater for Hans Schleger (Zero). Indeed, it is an indictment of the Ministry of Information that they made so little use of Schleger's design skill during WW2. Hans Schleger may have suffered some sort of nervous breakdown at the beginning of the war. Certainly, work dried up and money was very tight for at least two years. Pat Schleger recalls that, "Hans left London and rented a cottage in Cobham, Surrey where he began a course in psychoanalysis."²⁷⁰ It was about two years before the Ministry began to make use of Schleger's talents. Henrion too must have endured many difficulties as an alien of German origin.²⁷¹ Arnold Rothholz was a German graphic designer and poster artist who arrived in Britain during 1938. He produced several designs for RoSPA but the exact circumstances of his relationship with them must have been extraordinarily difficult. Rothholz was interned on the Isle of Man as an enemy

²⁶⁹ Haworth Booth (1979) p82.

²⁷⁰ Schleger (2001) p24.

²⁷¹ FHK Henrion had worked in Britain from 1936 and had settled only in 1939.



Figure 44. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Broken Strands

Torn Hands

Watch Out for Needling"

1943

Eckersley Archive LCC

alien and subsequently deported to Canada. In the circumstances, it is amazing that he returned.²⁷²

In fact, the RoSPA campaign became one of the main supports for European designers who had arrived in Britain before 1939. The appointment of Ashley Havinden to the Publicity Committee of RoSPA opened the door for many designers who had been marginalized by the ministerial and bureaucratic commissioning process of the Ministry of Information.

The roll call of poster designers used by RoSPA reflects the emergence of a younger generation of designers and the influx of creative people from Europe in the years leading up to WW2. Havinden, Schleger and Kauffer were already members of the design establishment – both in their achievements and by virtue of the respect their peers granted them. Tom Eckersley must be counted as a relatively well-established designer by this time; G R Morris, H R Rothholz, Manfred Reiss could not.²⁷³ Not all the RoSPA designers were able to continue as designers after WW2.

The period immediately after WW2 must have been professionally difficult with a sudden decrease in the amount of work available and a sudden increase in competition amongst designers out of service. RoSPA itself, as we have seen, could not continue at the levels of

²⁷² Recalled in conversation with Stephen Rothholz 2003.

²⁷³ Biographical information is included, where available, in the index of RoSPA designers with the catalogue of posters.



Figure 45. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Take Warning

Wear Goggles or Use the Screen

1942

Eckersley Archive LCC

production that it had sustained during the war. The younger generation of designers found work after WW2 with the GPO, in films and television and in teaching.

The circumstances of Eckersley's wartime activity in the RAF allowed him to work through his brief and to produce a mental image of the finished work in such a way that he could produce it during the short periods of leave that he was allowed. Figures 41 through to 48 (pages 186, 188, 190, 192, 194, 196, 198 and 200) show a selection of Eckersley's RoSPA posters. Several stylistic features emerge that are specific to his work such as the idea of framing a central visual element of the poster with a contextualising fragment of a larger, foregrounded, element. In figure 41 (p186) the injured worker is shown through the space of a broken ladder thereby connecting the broken ladder with its human consequences. Figures 42 and 43 (pages 188 and 190) use a similar device to communicate the dangers of climbing safely when stacking crates in the warehouse and of not leaving hatches uncovered.

It should be noted that the flat colours and simplifications of poster art, derived in part from the two dimensional effects of Japanese woodcuts, require a perceptual portal to work effectively. In the travel posters of the 1930s this is often a black printing which establishes the powerful illusion of perspective and locks the other areas of colour into their proper relations. The Eckersley device uses a more subtle, shaded, version of this effect.



Figure 46. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Asking for Trouble"

1942

Eckersley Archive LCC

Figure 44 (p192) shows a more abstract solution to a ROSPA brief but uses a similar design to that shown previously. The broken strands are magnified through a lens. Interestingly, the central element is reproduced photographically so that it appears more realistically than the remainder of the metal rope. The use of the lens directs attention, scientifically, to details that are usually too small to be noticed. The allusion to science and technology implicit in this image is ideally suited to the engineering workshops of WW2.

Figures 45 and 46 (pages 194 and 196) reproduce posters by Eckerlsey that refer to his knowledge of a wider visual culture in their conception. The images allude to the possibilities of industrial injury by showing the dressing and patch of eye injury and by showing the broken ladder. The cropped face in figure 45 (p194) is a dramatic compositional device drawn from photography and magazine page layout. The oversized foot in figure 46 (p196) recalls the French poster artist Cassandre's famous design for "*Unic shoes*" from 1932.²⁷⁴

Figures 47 and 48 (pages 198 and 200) are from a series of posters that RoSPA produced to address the theme of proper quartermastering within the workplace. Both these designs use elements of photography to establish the realism of their representations.

²⁷⁴ Mouron Cassandre (1985) p78, illustration 166 and also plate 38. A similar poster from 1933 is also on p78, illustration 168. Two further shoe posters are reproduced on p83, illustrations 187 and 188.



Figure 47. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Prevent Loose Heads

Inspect Daily"

1943

Eckersley Archive LCC

RoSPA discovered that the splintering of broken tools injured many workers. Pieces of metal would fly from the points or blades of tools that had been weakened by overuse. This was especially true of any tools being hammered. Best practice was for tools to be inspected as a matter of routine and for broken tools to be exchanged for new. This practice was unfamiliar to many workers drafted into the workplace and went against the rhetoric of economy and effort that dominated the workplace during WW2. Many injuries could be avoided by the simple practice of wearing safety goggles and exchanging broken tools promptly.

After WW2 Tom Eckersley resumed his career as a poster designer. Eckersley established a distinctive style during the 1940s that allowed him to pursue themes of humour in graphic communication. Eckersley was, at this time, a member of the Alliance Graphique Internationale (AGI), an organisation that eventually brought together continental and North American designers.²⁷⁵ Eckersley was one of only two representatives from Britain during the 1950s and his work would have been conspicuous in its contrast with the prevailing functionalism of his contemporaries.²⁷⁶ Figure 79 (p340) shows a later poster by Eckersley. This image is typical of Eckersley's humorous design after WW2.

²⁷⁵ AGI was established in 1951. The founders were Donald Brun and Fritz Buhler from Switzerland together with Jean Colin, Jacques Garamond and Jean Picart Le Doux from France.

²⁷⁶ Michael Havinden lists Ashley's attendance at both the AGI conferences in Paris (1951) and London (1952). See National Galleries of Scotland, Edinburgh (2003) p21.



Figure 48. RoSPA poster by Tom Eckersley

"Sound Tools - Safer Working"

1940s

Eckersley Archive LCC

Tom Eckersley was unique amongst the poster designers of WW2 in combining a career in the forces with his role as poster designer beyond it. His great achievement was to use the technical limitations of mechanical reproduction and of RoSPA's economics to devise a way of working and of representing his design so that it could be translated into camera-ready artwork in the relatively short periods of leave. Eckersley brought a level of visual sophistication to designs that appear deceptively simple. In consequence, they retain their interest and effectiveness as visual communication.

Part One Section Three

RoSPA Printing and Technology

By the very end of the 1930s the graphic design community, augmented by émigré designers, had begun to experiment with photography in poster design.

Figure 49 (p204) shows the London Transport poster by the American designer and photographer Man Ray. The design uses photomontage to re-present the London Transport symbol as a planet. The poster measures 25 x 40 inches and is about the largest example of half-tone printing from before WW2. At this scale the poster image is visibly disintegrating into a pattern of dots as the available half-tones are not fine enough to retain definition. The RoSPA posters are, whilst smaller in size than London Transport posters, considerably advanced in the quality of their printing. It is therefore appropriate that we should turn our attention to the printers and machines uniquely associated with this campaign.

The RoSPA posters that form the basis of this research all have the imprint of the Sheffield printing firm of Loxley Brothers. This section aims to present the history of Loxley Brothers and of the RoSPA campaign as intimately related and supported by the practical and technical skills of the printers using methods of colour reproduction which were, for their time, at the very forefront of technical possibilities. The relationship

between RoSPA and Loxley Brothers begins at the very start of the campaigning activities of the NSFA and continues, without a break, to the 1980s.

The firm of Loxley Brothers continues to prosper and I am grateful for their assistance in pointing me towards some of their former colleagues who have been able to help me. Chief amongst these is Mr John Birch, of Sheffield, who has helped me with technical questions about printing and with his experience of managing the RoSPA account. Mrs Julie Andrews, also of Sheffield, has been of help in answering my questions about the distributive role of Loxley Brothers on behalf of RoSPA. I am very much indebted to them both.

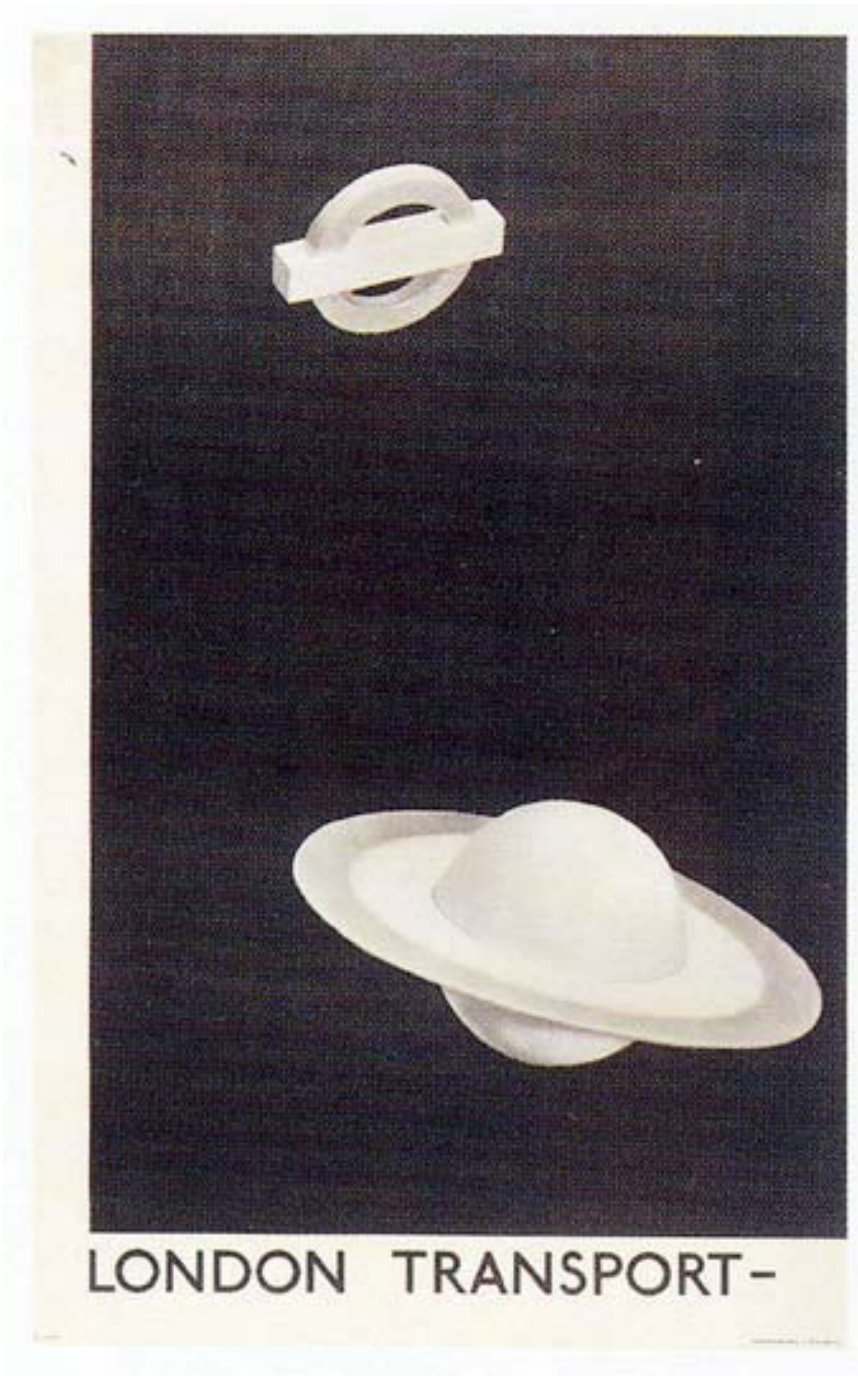


Figure 49. London transport poster by Man Ray

"London Transport Keeps London Going"

1939

London Transport Collection

Printing and Technology

The technical determinants of the RoSPA campaign are described by reference to the RoSPA printers and to their historical development as members of a Yorkshire-centred commercial, technical and religious community. The 1920s and 30s was a period during which this community attempted to extend its reach in all areas of its activities. The relationships between Loxley Brothers, Letchworth and RoSPA move the interests of this original community to the heart of the establishment during WW2.

Loxley Brothers Printers

The printing firm of Loxley Brothers celebrated their centenary in 1954. The event was marked by an announcement in *"Sheffield Quality"* (the magazine of the Sheffield Chamber of Commerce) under the banner "Loxley Brothers are 100."²⁷⁷ The short text presents a brief history of the firm along with a list of their current activities and shows a photograph of a small trade stand erected as part of the centenary celebrations in Sheffield. Coincidentally, Loxley Brothers were the printers of *"Sheffield Quality."*

A more substantial history of the firm exists in the form of a typewritten manuscript commissioned by Loxley Brothers on the occasion of their centenary and prepared by Mary Walton. The paper is simply titled *"Loxley Brothers 100 Years Old"* and is held in the Local History Collections of Sheffield City Library.²⁷⁸ The library catalogue notes that Loxley Brothers presented the manuscript in 1959. The exact purpose of this manuscript is not recorded. It is probable that it formed part of a memento of a celebratory event or dinner held in honour of the centenary. It does not appear to have been printed and bound as something substantial and may have taken the form of an insert within a printed menu. A file of supporting correspondence, held with the manuscript text, notes that the original commission from Loxley Brothers was for, "a text of some 15,000 words and that was probably more than

²⁷⁷ *"Sheffield Quality"* (1954) *"Loxley's are 100,"* November issue, p31.

²⁷⁸ Sheffield Local History Library collection (338-4SQ).

they actually required. A suggestion of about 10,000 was put forward as appropriate.”²⁷⁹

The name of Loxley is closely associated with the Sheffield area. Indeed, it is the name of one of the five rivers whose fast streams form the basis of Sheffield’s early industrialisation. The Loxley river is the most considerable of these streams and the northernmost. The family name derives from an association with the valley and with the village of Loxley that was situated at its heart. There were many Nonconformist communities around Sheffield and Loxley is recognised as a Quaker name.

The founders of the printing firm were Edward and William Loxley. Edward was born in 1821 and William in 1831.²⁸⁰ They were members of an extensive, but not especially wealthy, family and after attending local independent schools William was apprenticed to Ridge and Jackson, printers in Sheffield.²⁸¹ Edward later joined his brother within the printing firm.

Ridge had first established himself in Sheffield during 1826 and had taken over the printing of “*The Sheffield Mercury*” from a Mr Todd. His partnership with Thomas Jackson was established during 1830 and was distinguished by their being the first firm to use steam-powered printing presses in Sheffield. It is of some consequence for the later development

²⁷⁹ Letter from Mr E Hyde (director) to Mary Walton.

²⁸⁰ Walton (1954) p2.

²⁸¹ Walton (1954) p3.

of Loxley Brothers that both brothers were part of a printing firm that embraced the most up-to-date and efficient methods of printing. Ridge and Jackson sold their newspaper printing interests to the rival "*Sheffield Times*" group in 1840 and concentrated their efforts on high-class general printing for the local business community.

Edward is recorded as being out of indentures in 1842 and as having established himself as a compositor at an address in West St, Sheffield.²⁸² He seems, then, to have left the printing trade and worked as a greengrocer before accepting the invitation to join William in establishing Loxley Brothers as printers. They did this on the 14th October, 1854, describing themselves as "printers, booksellers and stationers."²⁸³ Walton makes the point that, in addition to the brothers being indentured to a firm that believed and accepted the commercial benefits of the most modern technologies, they had witnessed for themselves the, "amazing and spectacular expansion of Sheffield metals industry." This expansion had come about through the rapid development of the railways and, in consequence, of the transports of heavy goods and steel.

During the 1860s and 70s a second, decisive, phase of expansion followed the regional development that had occurred during the brothers' childhood. The brothers were perfectly placed, therefore, to benefit from the resultant multiplication in printing work from limited companies,

²⁸² Walton (1954) p4.

²⁸³ Walton (1954) p5.

government orders and a general growth in the size and complexity of business administration. The Loxley Brothers had founded their firm in a specialised branch of the business printing trade – the making up of bespoke printed ledgers and order books. These were made by Loxley Brothers at their Atlas Works and presented to the public and to trade buyers in the office and showroom on Fargate in central Sheffield. The showroom was at street level with print works, on four floors, to the rear.

Walton notes that from the early 1860s the firm was closely associated with beginnings of worker and employee welfare. In the 1860s this took the form of cricket matches between the works team and local opponents. The team, called Atlas Works, were based at Bramhall Lane, Sheffield; now home of Sheffield United Football Club and previously also home to Sheffield United Cricket Club. The cricket club was instrumental in the formation of Yorkshire County Cricket Club and Loxley Brothers played their part, through the formation of local leagues, in the creation of a local working man's culture. The female employees were included in these recreations as support and as providers of tea and supper. Later, visits to the Yorkshire coast were arranged.

The interest of the brothers in employee welfare was based, in part at least, on their religious and Nonconformist beliefs. The links to other Quaker businesses and to the enlightened enterprise of the Nonconformists were to resurface in the 20th century and form a significant thread between the history of the firm and their work as printers to RoSPA.

By the end of the 19th century Loxley Brothers had established themselves as local printers. The succession was made more complex by the fact that Thomas, nephew of the founding brothers who had been groomed to take over the firm, died unexpectedly in 1909. Edward had retired prior to this and William, now in his 78th year resolved that the firm should pass out of family ownership. This was achieved in 1911 when the firm was sold to J W Hyde, F Siddall and Edward Widake. The new company retained the name of Loxley Brothers and resolved to expand into a regional, if not national printer, in the next phase of its activities. This process was begun by the acquisition of the Sheffield Independent Printers – a large general printing firm – and the appointment of J B Morrell, of York, as Chairman of the new firm.²⁸⁴

Morrell was well known in Yorkshire as a director of Rowntree, the York based confectionery firm of Quaker origins. He was also an Alderman of the city and Lord Mayor. In business he was recognised by contemporaries as a financial genius and credited, by Walton, with having turned Loxley Brothers onto, “a national printing firm of the first rank.”²⁸⁵ It was Morrell who saw the possibilities of growing the Loxley business through expansion, acquisition and consolidation. He was also able, through his business connections to raise the necessary capital for this plan. So successful was he that he was still in the chair for the centenary celebrations of 1954.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ John Bowes Morrell (1873-1963) was the also the founding father of the University of York and of the York Civic Trust (a conservation body). Morrell's life story is included in Vernon (1966).

²⁸⁵ Walton (1954) pp16 -17.

²⁸⁶ Morrell was also involved in the regional newspaper business as Chairman of the Yorkshire Herald newspaper Group.

The years 1920 and 1921 were very active for Loxley Brothers. In addition to the local expansion already mentioned the firm purchased the printing firms of British Periodicals Ltd in 1921, of St Dunstan's Press, of the Cornish Press and of the Garden City Press based in Letchworth. The firm also established offices in London in Fleet Street and, later, in Southwark. These metropolitan offices were part of the drive to turn Loxley into a national scale printer and were, as Walton notes, "part of a carefully considered plan of absorption and adoption."²⁸⁷

The Letchworth business was primarily a book printer and binding works. Letchworth was the garden city laid out after the ideas of Ebenezer Howard at the end of the 19th century. It marked a continuation of social reform through enlightened capitalism that had begun with the model villages and worker welfare of Robert Owen, the Cadburys, the Rowntrees and Lord Leverhume at Port Sunlight. The equity of its workforce distinguished the organisational structure of the Garden City Press. New employees were given a six-month training period and then, if successful, were taken on and given the status of owner workers within the firm.

This early experimentation with worker welfare distinguishes Loxley Brothers from other printing firms of the time. The print industry was one of the first to unionise itself and did so very successfully. Whilst it would

²⁸⁷ Walton (1954) pp16-17.

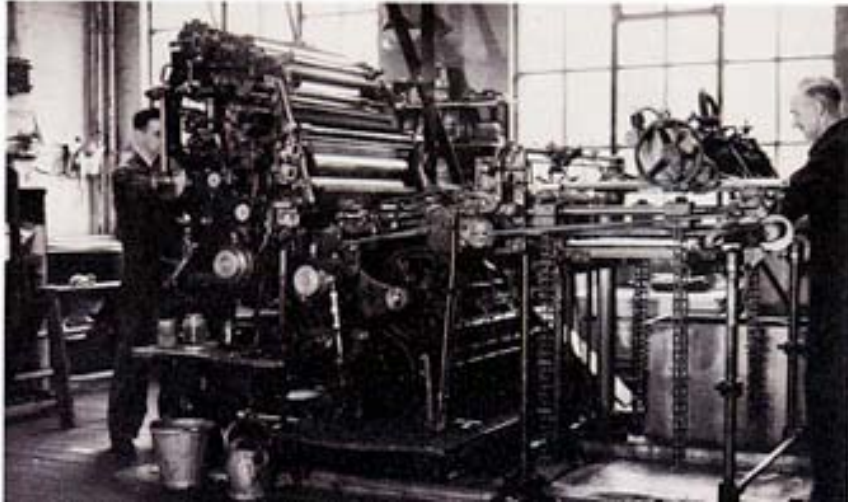


Figure 50. Photograph of rotary lithographic press
1937
Haworth and Company, London and Leicester

be wrong to suggest that worker relations at Loxley 's were uniformly harmonious, the firm seems to have enjoyed a remarkable degree of worker co-operation and satisfaction.

The works were kept busy by a steady flow of flat printing, in colour, for Rowntree's point-of-sale advertising that comprised trade cards and literature. This work was the bedrock against which the growth of the business could be assured. All the printing operations were consolidated into the new Atlas Works at Aizelwood Road in June 1921.

On December 6th 1923 a fire destroyed the new works.²⁸⁸ The company was able to survive by transferring work to its other sites and was able to use the disaster as an opportunity to re-equip Sheffield with the most up-to-date printing machines. By August 1925 the Aizelwood Road works were open for business and equipped with Crabtree offset-litho machines. It was these machines and their potential for the quick high-volume colour work that recommended Loxley Brothers to RoSPA during the 1930s and especially during WW2. By the end of the 1920's Loxley Brothers own publicity described their activities as, "specialised in catalogues, brochures, house magazines and general high-class letterpress work, litho printing in colour and labels, posters, show cards and general advertising."²⁸⁹

It is surprising that Walton makes no mention in her history of Loxley Brothers largest clients in Sheffield. These were undoubtedly Rowntree

²⁸⁸ Fires in printing works are not unusual. The quantities of paper and ink stored in the works will feed a fire so that, once started, the effects are especially devastating.

²⁸⁹ Walton (1954) p18.

through the connection with Morrell and, from about 1930 onwards the NSFA and subsequently RoSPA.

The workshop illustrated in figure 50 (p212) shows a typical lithographic press and gives some indication of the scale of these machines. The vertical arrangement of printing rollers makes the machine relatively compact although the paper feed, which goes from the bottom of the press to the top, requires some space around the machine.

Mr John Birch of Sheffield joined Loxley Brothers in 1949 as a management trainee. He began work on the shop floor and was given a series of tasks to familiarise himself with the organisation, workings and personalities of the works. A period of National Service followed and then he was taken upstairs to be the personal assistant of the managing director – Mr Hyde. John Birch worked as part of a team that also included C W Blyth and Mr S Birch as senior directors. John Birch rose to become managing director of Loxley Brothers during the 1970's and 80's. He was instrumental, at the end of the 1980's, in leading a management buyout of the firm – so that Loxley Brothers could prosper independently of the large printing group that had been created by the plans of Morrell and his successors. One of John Birch's major responsibilities was the management of the RoSPA account.²⁹⁰

²⁹⁰ Mr John Birch retired from active participation in Loxley Brothers in the early 1990's through ill health. The recollections of John Birch were collected in answers to a questionnaire and also in conversation on Monday 19th November 2001.

RoSPA and Loxley Brothers

The name of Loxley is associated with RoSPA publications in their earliest form. The relationship therefore extends to the very origins of RoSPA's predecessors in the period immediately after WW1. This was the period when Loxley Brothers were preparing themselves for the expansion that would see them become printers on a national scale. It was also the period of the Sheffield works fire and this was used to re-equip the by Loxley Brothers workshop with modern presses made by R W Crabtree of Leeds. These presses were two colour rotary offset presses for lithographic printing and could be used for a wide variety of work.

No record of how the relationship between Loxley Brothers and the NSFA began survives. It is clear that because of Loxley Brothers London office and because of their newly equipped works that they were in a position to actively pursue new work. It is possible, if part of the contract was to distribute the material on behalf of the NSFA, that Loxley Brothers position in South Yorkshire may have been considered an advantage. However, it is unlikely that this would have been held as especially significant by the NSFA who, we must assume, chose Loxley Brothers on the basis of a competitive pricing structure for the work.

The NSFA material from before WW2 took the form of printed pamphlets for distribution to motorists. It should be remembered that, before the outbreak of WW2, the road safety division of the NSFA was by far the

most important. The Industrial section had only recently been formed and was limited to producing pamphlets and text posters. An important characteristic of the NSFA and, indeed, the RoSPA material that came after it was that all their campaigns were based on the repetition of simple principles. From a printing point-of-view this had the consequence of placing a premium on the cost savings available if work could be repeated, at a later date, inexpensively. The reprinting of both text and poster material, before 1939, would not have been economic unless the plates or stones from previous printings could be retained.

The relative expense of litho stones, along with their bulk and size, had meant that there was no tradition, in Britain at least, of retaining stones for reprinting later editions. This only became an economic option with the advent of zinc plate lithography after WW1. This was exactly the time when Loxley Brothers were retooling their workshop and beginning to work in this cost-effective way.

It is probably true that, in Britain, Loxley Brothers were amongst relatively few printers able to offer this kind of service at that particular time. It seems that the home market was always competitive. It should be noted that the costs associated with plant and equipment for commercial printers are very great and that it may take up to ten years for the costs of new presses to be paid for out of the profits of work. It is therefore hardly surprising that printers have, since earliest times, used their existing plant to the limits of its capacity before having investment in new plant forced, by competition, upon them.

R W Crabtree Machine Makers

The firm of R W Crabtree were specialist printing press manufacturers based in Leeds. The firm was established in 1895 by Richard Wadsworth, Crabtree and Alfred Horsfield.²⁹¹ Their very earliest machines were manufactured for the textile industry that was historically important in Yorkshire. Crabtree entered into the development and manufacturing of printing machinery at the beginning of the 20th century. The Crabtree company was to develop specialist skills in the fields of newspaper printing; web-feed, metal decoration and rotary offset litho machines. Nowadays the Crabtree name is again independent after being bought out from the Vickers group of companies. It includes, within its assets, the Leeds based manufacturing companies of Dawson, Payne and Eliot and also of George Mann and Co.

The longest established firm amongst these is that of Dawson Payne and Eliot that has its origins within an iron foundry set up in 1849 by William Dawson. The firm of Dawson's is best known as the manufacturers of the Wharfdale printing press – an international success that sustained the expansion of the firm for over fifty years.²⁹² The Wharfdale was a powered cylinder press. The firm of George Mann & Co. were pioneer manufacturers of rotary offset litho presses from as early as the 1870s. The firm was later incorporated into the Crabtree group of companies

²⁹¹ The name of Wadsworth is associated with Yorkshire. The artist Edward Wadsworth was from Cleckheaton, near Bradford.

²⁹² Moran (1973) pp133-138.

and became part of the most important manufacturers of lithographic printing machines in the world.

The origins of lithography go back to the end of the 18th century. Alois Senefelder made the discovery of lithography in 1796 (the exact date of the discovery is unclear because Senefelder only announced his discovery to the world some years later). The process is based on the principle that oil and water do not mix. Senefelder discovered that marks, made in grease or oil, upon limestone would hold ink whilst ink could be repelled, or washed, from the stone. By bringing paper into contact with the stone a print could be made without the need for the expensive and time-consuming processes of composition, engraving or cutting. Senefelder's first commercial success came with the use of lithography, in one colour, for the printing of sheet music.²⁹³

The perfection of single-colour lithography was followed by the development of colour lithography. This involved the preparation of separate stones for the printing of each colour. The effects that were possible by the overprinting of coloured inks made lithography a process that allowed for the most exact and accurate work to be undertaken.

Another, unexpected advantage of the lithographic process was the possibility of printing large-scale work. This was possible, over and above the limits of letterpress, relief or intaglio work, because of the nature of the lithographic stones and because of the mechanics of the

²⁹³ The origins of lithography are documented in Twyman (1966) p20.

litho process. The stones from which lithographic prints were made could be hewn and prepared in any size – the limits to the size of stone were set by the costs of large stones and the difficulties in handling them in the workshop and within the existing engineering limits of press manufacture. It should be noted that the largest stones for commercial printing, measuring some 60 x 40 inches and perhaps some 8 inches or so in depth could weigh in excess of a ton. The movement of such stones required a large number of workmen, heavy plant-lifting machinery and a not inconsiderable space. These requirements helped preclude this kind of printmaking to all but the largest concerns.

It is not surprising, given the scale of investment required for large-scale poster printing, that there were relatively few companies of sufficient size to accept this work and that they tended to be spread geographically around the UK and to be closely associated with specific regional economies. The craft traditions associated with stone litho printing also tended to slow down technological transitions. A consequence of these factors is that larger scale poster images were printed, up to 1939, in more-or-less the same fashion as they had been fifty years earlier.

The size of large litho stones was much greater than the maximum sizes possible in relief or intaglio printing. The creation of very large engraved plates was technically difficult and very expensive. In addition, the mechanical complexities of maintaining an even pressure over the whole of the plate, for printing, had not been solved in the long history of letterpress printing before the arrival of lithography.

In contrast to the pressure required in printmaking, from letterpress or intaglio plates, lithography required merely a contact between stone and paper. In the earliest presses the movement of a roller or blade assured the contact between paper and stone across the whole of the stone. This pressed the paper lightly onto the stone. The discovery that wet ink could be offset onto a roller blanket and then brought into contact with the paper transformed the mechanics of lithographic printing from a flat bed to a rolling action. This had important consequences for the speeds and outputs of these machines. The earliest machines developed by George Mann & Co were presses carrying stones and with mechanised inking and offsetting rollers travelling over the stone and transferring the image to the paper. Avoiding direct contact with the stone greatly reduced the potential for damage to the surface of the stone. Damage that was time-consuming and expensive to put right.²⁹⁴

Senefelder himself had searched for a substitute, or replacement, material for lithographic plates and discovered that zinc metal, and later aluminium, could be made to work in a similar way to lithographic limestone. Clearly, the difficulties and costs of lithography could be reduced if a cheap and lightweight substitute for stone could be found. It was not until the end of the 19th century that advances in photographic chemistry made the replacement of stone by zinc plates a realistic option. If zinc plates could be made thin enough they could also be formed to fit onto a printing cylinder thereby transforming the action of the

²⁹⁴ The benefits of offset lithography were first noticed in relation to the lithographic printing of sheet metal for packaging. See Twyman (1966) p57.

press from a rolling to rotary (spinning) action and speeding up the printing process still further. It was the potential market for fast, compact and efficient machines to which Crabtree's addressed itself.

The development of their two-colour offset rotary press and its launch, in the early 1920s, was the fruition of their strategy. Loxley Brothers required versatile and efficient machines and it is not surprising that they should choose those manufactured by their Yorkshire neighbours.

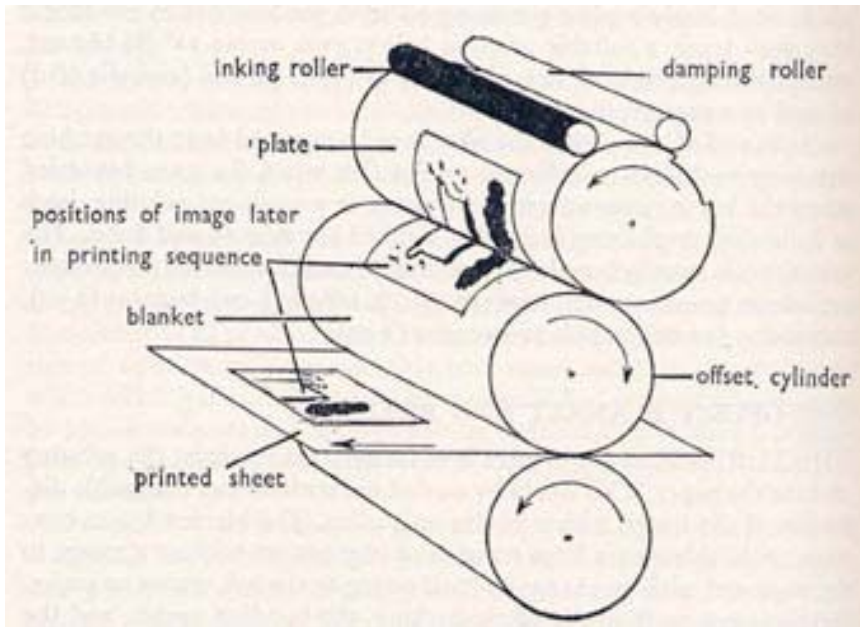


Figure 51. Diagram of the offset principle in lithographic printing
From *"Photo Litho Offset"* by Eric Chambers published by Ernest Benn Ltd
London
1967
Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

Crabtree Two Colour Rotary Offset Machine

The Crabtree two colour offset machine was designed to offer a compact machine that was versatile and efficient. The use of metal plates and their incorporation into the cylinders of the machines greatly reduced the time required for make-ready before printing and made short-run printing an economic possibility for both printer and client. The press was launched in the early 1920's and Crabtree continue to manufacture and service a version of this press to this day.

The Crabtree press was a compact arrangement of rollers within a vertical cage. The rollers were of two types arranged into two groups – one for each colour. Each group was made up of three large rollers – the plate cylinder, the transfer cylinder and the impression cylinder. An arrangement of smaller rollers took ink from a trough at the front of the machine and spread it into a thin layer across the whole length of the plate cylinder. Paper is fed from the bottom of the machine up, between the transfer cylinder and the impression cylinder, before being fed out, by the mechanism of the delivery cylinder, from the top of the machine. Generally the paper was fed from a static pile at the bottom of the machine and drawn into the machine by a series of grips along the leading edge of the paper. Crabtree developed a three-colour version of this press by the addition of another three large rollers and another inking roller arrangement into a higher tower between the rollers for the second

colour and the delivery cylinder. The presses were also developed in a "Perfactor" range that allowed for printing on both sides of the paper.

The principle of offset-litho is illustrated in the diagram reproduced as figure 51 (p222). The Crabtree press was designed to have a vertical arrangement of these rollers. There were two sets, one for each colour printing. The paper would enter the machine at the lower set and be taken up through the offset rollers and impression cylinders before emerging, printed surface up, from the top roller.

The output of these machines, running at something like six or seven thousand impressions an hour were held back, not by the mechanical complexities of faster actions, but by the difficulties of maintaining paper feed and developing inks that were fluid enough to work through the machine but able to adhere to the paper with accuracy and precision.

A detailed technical description of the three-colour press is included, in two parts, in the "*Crabtree Review*" magazine for 1953. The "*Review*" was a house journal for the employees and clients of the R W Crabtree group of companies that, by this time, had a widespread manufacturing base and an even more widely spread client base. Their two and three-colour litho presses were especially popular in India, south-east Asia and Australasia. The Printing Library of St Bride's has four, odd, issues of this magazine and only the second part of the description of the three-colour press. The "*Crabtree Review*" refers to presses, established in India

before WW2 that printed bank notes and ran, almost continuously, for over fifteen years.

Crabtree manufactured this press in two sizes. The basic model was the double-crown or 20 by 30 inch model. The cylinders were thirty inches long with a circumference that allowed for the printing of the full plate in one revolution. An obvious consequence of this arrangement is that the paper is fed from its longest edge. In portrait “double crown” posters such as those produced for RoSPA this means that the posters are printed across the sheet rather than from top-to-bottom.

This can be noticed by close inspection. If there are any faults in the inking roller arrangement a vertical “flat” may be visible as a repeated stripe of slightly darker tone. This is the result of inking rollers left standing in the machine and touching each other.

The technical director of RoSPA, Mr Sidney A Grummitt, describes the limitations imposed by RoSPA on the printing of their posters for a review published in 1951.²⁹⁵ The constraints are all the result of cost considerations. The most significant is the widespread use, within the campaign of the split-duct process. This allows the printing of two, or more, colours from a single roller and is achieved by dividing the inking trough into sections so that different coloured inks may be loaded onto the rollers. Obviously the different colours can only be printed onto different areas of the plate. The colours may be kept separate or allowed

²⁹⁵ Allner (1951) pp10-11.

to run together for the rainbow background effects.²⁹⁶ The split-duct process really came into use during the period of post-war austerity.

Within the ROSPA campaign the limit of colours for poster work was four and, accordingly, this could be achieved using a two-colour press with a split-duct process. Grummitt notes, that from 1941, RoSPA had employed Leonard Cusden as artistic director of the campaign and that part of Cusden's role was to assure the understanding of the poster designers with regard to the limitations and possibilities of the split-duct process.

The split-duct process was limited in the fact that its effects could not be assured over long print-runs. The vibrations of the machine would cause, over the length of a large edition, the colours to merge together and to become a muddy combination. Accordingly, the split-duct process required accurate and precise machine minding to assure clean results. To work effectively the speed of the machine had to be matched to inks with optimum viscosity and with a paper that tended to absorb the impact of ink, hitting the paper at speed. Machine made papers with a china coating were recognised as the best since they also allowed the ink to dry quite quickly through the china clay absorbing the ink at impact. Thinning the ink to the right consistency for the machine remained a matter of judgement and experience for the machine minders of the Sheffield works.

²⁹⁶ These rainbow effects were used for inexpensive security printing on items such as lottery tickets.

The large capital costs of printing machinery have played their part in the organisation of printing works since the end of the 19th century. An early example of this within the poster printing sector would be the firm of Jarrold and Co based in Norwich. Their printing workshops had grown in tandem with the commercial success of the Norwich mustard growers Coleman's. As the Coleman business grew, they required an increasing number of labels, packaging, point-of-sale notices and so forth. Based on the value of this business Jarrolds were able to equip themselves with larger and speedier presses that enabled them to begin printing posters for Coleman's and other local firms.²⁹⁷ A similar association existed between the cosmetic pioneer Rimmel and the printing firm established by Jules Cheret in Paris.²⁹⁸ Loxley Brothers were fortunate to have both Rowntree's of York and RoSPA as clients.

We have seen how these capital costs, amortised over many years, actually held back investment and renewal in plant so that in 1939 the majority of posters in Britain were printed using processes that were unchanged since the time of Cheret and the birth of the modern poster. In fact, machine minding was only part of the problem. More onerous was the reliance on craft in the make-ready processes assuring a steady stream of work for the machines. The advent of photolithography effectively signalled the end of these craft traditions and ushered in the technologies by which craft would be marginalized in favour of mechanical reproduction.

²⁹⁷ Jarrold's historical connection to other local businesses is explained in the Jarrold Museum in Norwich.

²⁹⁸ Noted by Le Men (1991) in *"Print Quarterly,"* Volume VIII, Number 4, p375 in relation to the early history of lithographic printing.

The economic considerations of the RoSPA campaign limited the number of printings and drove the design considerations of the RoSPA artists. Make-ready for RoSPA was therefore reduced to a process of producing two half-tone plates, one for each colour.

This was done by producing a negative on a photographically sensitised metal plate, usually copper or zinc. The plates were then etched.²⁹⁹ Harold Curwen adds a note, at this point in his explanation of the process, suggesting that experience teaches that half-tones have to be etched rather more than theory would suggest. Unaided, he suggests, the mechanics of the process would, “produce a series of gradations much flatter than the original.”³⁰⁰ The famous Man Ray posters produced for London Transport in 1939 show this silvery flatness perfectly. The Man Ray posters are probably at the technical limits of half-tone printing at that time measuring double-royal (25 by 40 inches) size.³⁰¹

The separation of craft and industry in lithographic printing began during the 1930s. As a consequence of the printing industry moving away from handcraft-based lithography an opportunity presented itself to artists to embrace this craft skill for their own purposes. A group of young artists at the Royal College of Art were introduced, through Paul Nash, to Harold Curwen. Curwen’s was one of the most familiar lithographic printers in London and had a works in Plaistow. Hitherto (that is before about 1928)

²⁹⁹ The term “etched” is analogous to the photographic term “fixed.” It does not refer to acid or to the process of etching copper plates.

³⁰⁰ Curwen (1933) p103.

³⁰¹ “*London Transport Keeps London Going*” reproduced in Oliver Green (2001) p77 and as figure 49 (p204).

such works would have been off-limits to any but a member of the printing fraternity. The membership of the trade was regulated, at local level, through trade Chapels. These were represented on regional councils and on the national executive of the Union. This restrictive organisation lasted, in Fleet Street at least, until the late 1970's.³⁰²

Curwen was remarkable in allowing artists into the workshop and for persuading his staff, including the master lithographer Thomas Griffiths, to share their knowledge and skill. Griffiths and Curwen could recognise that the commercial future of these methods was uncertain and probably viewed their association with more artistic enterprises as a noble form of retirement. Curwen had also been associated with the revival of fine printing and black-and-white engraving that had been part of the post William Morris Arts and Crafts movement. It was in this context that artists such as Edward Bawden, Eric Ravilious and Barnett Freedman were able to develop what became known as autolithography. The story of Curwen's association with artists from the Royal College of Art has been told by Gilmour (1977) and also by Rennie (1992).³⁰³

It is thanks to Curwen that a small technical bibliography exists from this period. His *"Processes of Graphic Reproduction,"* published in 1933, makes the distinction between "autographic and photographic methods."³⁰⁴ Griffiths was probably the most gifted and technically expert lithographer of his time and collected his knowledge into a major work

³⁰² Gilmour (1977) pp22-23 describes the "closed shop" mentality within the industry.

³⁰³ Gilmour (1977) p22 and also Rennie *"The Poster Print"* included in Robin Garton (1992) p273.

³⁰⁴ Harold Curwen (1934). Curwen describes these methods quite separately.

“Colour Printing.” This came complete with colour charts, and was published as a valedictory in 1948.³⁰⁵ This was an enlarged version of his *“Technique of Colour Printing”* that had been published by Crosby Lockwood at Stationers’ Hall.³⁰⁶ In his introductory remarks Frank Pick endorsed the potential impact of artistic lithography in elevating public taste and appreciation.³⁰⁷ The advent of photographic methods of transfer and make-ready were to help his friend Ernest Bevin effect a massive change in public opinion through the RoSPA posters.

Of course, the impact of these technologies would have been severely limited without the supporting systems of distribution and display. The RoSPA organisation had established effective display areas within its member factories and delegated the management of these areas to the safety representative of the works. The distribution of the posters to members was part of the Loxley service to RoSPA.

³⁰⁵ Thomas Griffiths (1948) is a more informal collection of recollections than its shorter predecessor.

³⁰⁶ Thomas Griffiths (1940) describes the process of lithography entirely in relation to the craft skills of hand press work.

³⁰⁷ Frank Pick quoted in Griffiths (1948) pvii.

Part One Section Three – RoSPA and Design

Loxley RoSPA and Distribution

From the beginnings of their relationship with RoSPA Loxley Brothers undertook the distribution of printed material to RoSPA's subscriber members. This was done from a special area of the Sheffield works where there was space for storing posters and other material. The database of RoSPA members was held as a card-index file and the material was distributed by post. The workings of the campaign required a monthly posting of material. The posters were sent out in tubes with hand-written address labels. No RoSPA posters appear to have folds.

Posters are usually folded mechanically as the final press process. This makes them much easier to handle if they are of large size. The posters simply have to have a title written on the exterior fold so that they can be identified, in store, without opening them up. The RoSPA posters were stored at Loxley Brothers and seem to have been stored flat. With regular mail shots and with the same material going out to the membership this must have been the simplest and least expensive way of organising the posting.

RoSPA and Loxley seem to have been happy to use the Royal Mail for this service. Indeed, the successful continuation of Post Office services during the war is another strand in the interwoven narrative of "civilizing agencies" that supported the war effort at home and abroad. The story of

the Post Office at war is, like that of the BBC or of the railways, beyond the scope of this thesis. Suffice to say that the story has been written as one of a series of pamphlets produced in the aftermath of the war.

Hay (1946) has described the difficulties of maintaining the Post Office service in time of war and of the mobilisation of material and people required to provide the communications infrastructure to support the war effort. Hay makes the point that, “the great displacements required by the war effort (of soldiers to camps and workers to factories) necessarily produced a great increase in the volume of unofficial communications between people.”³⁰⁸ Added to this was the enormous volume of military and official communications.

The industrial mobilisation organised by Ernest Bevin’s Ministry of Labour would not have been possible without the continuation of communication services by the Post Office. Similarly the distribution of propaganda material required the efficient continuation of postal services and also of railway services through out Britain.

The display environments within factories also improved as the war went on. The productive efforts of Bevin’s Ministry were achieved in two distinct phases. The first was through the mobilisation of small workshops and factories. The second was through the construction of large and efficient factories with a supporting infrastructure of canteen, social centre and first aid post. Obviously, it was easier to display the

³⁰⁸ Hay (1946) p5.

RoSPA messages within these newer structures and they were more efficient for addressing a larger, more concentrated workforce.³⁰⁹

The successful efforts of this “civilizing agency” throughout the war allowed the RoSPA campaign to be successful in reaching its target audience. Furthermore, the social and political objectives of the RoSPA campaign, as imagined by Ernest Bevin, could only succeed by their inclusion into the rich tapestry of communication across all media during the war. It was this tapestry of messages and ideals that allowed for the mythologization of people and effort that has become the dominant theme of “the people’s war.”

Part One of this thesis has traced the history and development of the RoSPA organisation and specifically of its Industrial Service in relation to the production efforts of WW2. The presentation of RoSPA material and of the story behind it is, I believe, entirely original. The significant personalities behind this project have been introduced and the technical determinants shaping the production and design of industrial safety posters have been described. Notwithstanding these technical determinants and the difficulties of war, the RoSPA posters are part of a huge volume of cultural production that effectively contextualised the experience of ordinary people during the war as something important and valuable. Part Two looks at the cultural contexts of the RoSPA posters.

³⁰⁹ In 1941 the industrial effort of WW2 was still concentrated in small workshops. The successful defence of Britain (1940), the German invasion of Russia (mid 1941) and America’s entry into the war (end 1941) all helped move the war economy onto an offensive footing. This was achieved through Bevin’s co-ordination of plant, materials and men and the through integration of new industrial infrastructure into the war effort.

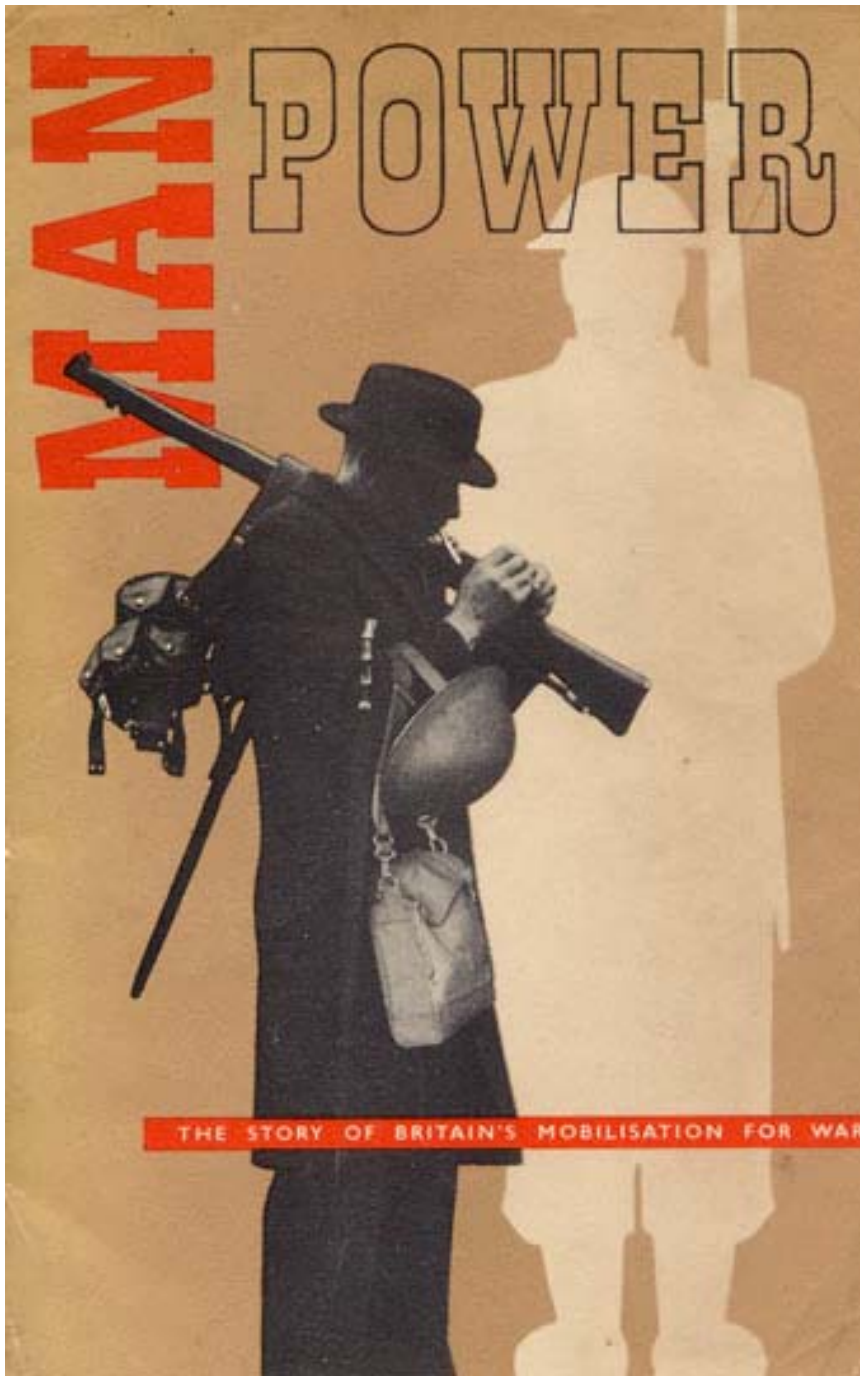


Figure 52. Cover of *"Man Power"*

Brochure published by the Ministry of Labour and National Service

1944

Paul and Karen Rennie

Part Two

RoSPA and its Cultural Contexts

Part Two

RoSPA and its Cultural Contexts

The second part of this thesis attempts to examine aspects of the RoSPA campaign within the wider cultural contexts of Britain at war. Part Two is divided into three sections.

The first section looks at the RoSPA address to its audience. The RoSPA campaign is identified as amongst the first to address the industrial working class within the factory and to do so using a sophisticated and progressive visual language. The industrial community addressed by RoSPA is understood to be in a process of transformation. Three aspects of this address are examined.

The first is in RoSPA's address to women workers. Nowhere is the transformation of community more evident than in the successful integration of women into the workforce. The section continues by describing RoSPA's engagement with the evolving visual languages of Surrealism and, finally, of the Left in Britain.

Part Two Section Two uses the idea of RoSPA as an agent in the transformation of community to investigate English Modernism. English Modernism is often presented as a problematic for cultural historians who have read its failure to conform to the prevailing trajectories of International Modernism as a fatal weakness. The RoSPA campaign

provides concrete evidence of a particularly English configuration of Modernism. English Modernism is revealed as both connected to and independent from its cotemporaries.

Part Three looks at the changing concept of graphic authorship within the contexts of evolving communities and transforming technologies of WW2.

The contents of Part Two are necessarily more speculative than those presented in Part One. Nevertheless, they allow us to account more fully for the cultural significance of the RoSPA campaign and to project that significance beyond WW2.



Figure 53. Female factory worker

Reproduced from "*Man Power*"

Brochure Published by the Ministry of Labour and National Service

1944

Paul and Karen Rennie

RoSPA and its Audiences

As soon as one considers any problem of this war one sees that the necessary moves cannot be made while the social structure of England remains what it is³¹⁰

George Orwell 1941

We have, so far, examined the RoSPA campaign in relation to the organisation of RoSPA and the technology of its printers, Loxley Brother's of Sheffield. Also, we have begun to trace the historical beginnings of the cultural project to which the RoSPA posters contribute and to examine the political project of industrial safety during wartime. We turn our attention, in this section, to examining the audiences to which RoSPA addressed itself and to looking at the stylistic and visual elements of the RoSPA posters and locating them within a matrix of visual communication in Britain.

I will argue that the RoSPA posters helped to develop a visually sophisticated and politically aware audience in Britain and to establish a visual language able to articulate the values of both the war experience on the Home-Front and, crucially, to allude to those of reconstruction. This section is divided into three parts which examine the address to women workers through RoSPA, the use by RoSPA designers of

³¹⁰ Orwell (1941) p35.

Surrealist techniques and strategies of image making, and the development, through the RoSPA campaign of an identifiably coherent set of Leftist symbols and representations.

I believe RoSPA designers to have been aware of developments in graphic design and to have appropriated elements of that successful design for their own ends. Later, I will argue that the changes in graphic design process, towards something approaching production, necessarily required the development of an acknowledged taxonomy of signs, symbols and other graphic elements. This new visual language was necessarily meritocratic and egalitarian. I will examine the representation of women in WW2 propaganda and distinguish it from its WW1 precedents. I will also look at the influence of Surrealist ideas in the development of a graphic language able to express and to communicate ideas and values simultaneously. Finally, I will look at the influence of Left iconography on the development of RoSPA's graphic style.

During the 1940s the notion of a visual taxonomy was still in its development and the suspension because of the war of normal channels of discussion, such as magazines like *"Modern Publicity,"* held up this project. It was only in 1949 with the publication of Herbert Spencer's *"Typographica,"* supported by Lund Humphries, that the project found an organising intelligence and a platform.³¹¹ A slightly different taxonomy began to be developed through the Royal College of Art's new design school and found expression in the College's magazine, *"Ark"* and in the

³¹¹ Poyner (2001) gives a full account of the development and influence of *"Typographica."*

development of “a pop sensibility.”³¹² The first issue of “*Ark*” was published in 1950. In Europe the magazines “*Graphis*” from Switzerland and “*Gebrauchsgraphik*” from Germany were able to provide a similar platform to the developing debate amongst design professionals.

³¹² The story of “*Ark*” and the origins of the British “pop sensibility” are described in Seago (1995).



Figure 54. Woman worker at J Stone & Co Deptford

c1943

From "*By Singleness of Purpose*" published by J Stone & Co

1945

Paul & Karen Rennie Collection

RoSPA and Women

Gender and Communications

The integration of women into the industrial workforce during WW2 and their consequent financial independence has been identified by Marwick (1968) as one of the most important elements of social change associated with the war.

Women workers were drafted into the factories in very large numbers during WW2. The story of the mobilization of factory labour was told in a Ministry of Labour publication "*Man Power*" from 1944. The cover of this brochure is reproduced as figure 52 (p234). A photograph of a woman worker from the publication is reproduced as figure 53 (p238).

There are surprisingly few photographs of women at work in factories. Factory facilities were protected from media scrutiny as part of an awareness of security issues. The photograph reproduced in figure 54 (p242) is taken from a post-war publication of an aviation and engineering firm, Stone & Co, in South London. The publication has many photographs of the works and shows clearly that women were employed in every capacity within the firm except for the specialist technical roles associated with engineering research. Marwick (1968) notes that there were 7,000 women employed in government ordnance factories and that by October 1944 the number had risen to 260,000.³¹³

³¹³ Marwick (1968) p292.

In agriculture Marwick quotes the figures 93,000 and 204,000 to illustrate a similar expansion.³¹⁴

The numbers of women involved in the front-line efforts of WW2 required a special sensitivity where official communications were involved. The motivations of the collective effort of WW2 were more complex than those of 1914-18 where the Home-Front had hardly made any impact on civilian life.

The abiding sensation of WW1 amongst women was of loss where a whole generation of husbands, fathers and sons were killed in battle. In contrast, the female experience of WW2 was often recalled in a way that stressed involvement, participation and adventure over the personal tragedies of loss and bereavement.³¹⁵

The aftermath of WW1 was a period of enormous political turmoil throughout Europe. As the consequences of the war became known, in terms of human and also of capital costs, popular movements emerged in opposition to the established political orders. These movements were directed, in the first instance, against the politics, machines and cultures that had become identified with the militarism that had driven the world to war in 1914. Accordingly, their objectives were aimed in various ways at transforming the world and ensuring that a similar war would not recur.

³¹⁴ Marwick (1968) p132. See also Marwick (1976) for an examination of the social changes of WW2 in relation to the Home-Front.

³¹⁵ Mass Observation collected many testimonies of this in their efforts to keep a track on civilian morale. McLain (1979) tells the story in detail.

The turmoil, although widespread, took different forms in the very different circumstances of the various combatant nations. By European standards the upheavals in Britain were modest having been spared the full horror of the battlefields. In these circumstances the political establishment spoke of “a land fit for heroes” and began to implement a programme of modest social change in order to stave off those with more radical political objectives.³¹⁶ It was in this spirit of accommodation that women were progressively enfranchised, in 1918 and 1927, in recognition of their contribution to the war economy and also in response to a long and articulate campaign of persuasion and direct-action.³¹⁷

The post-war transformation of the political demography of Britain required new forms of communication within the established media so as to effectively engage with the newly enfranchised and those returning from the war. The experience of trench warfare was too tragic and traumatic for many of the working-class men involved and was, retrospectively at least, rationalised by a variety of means. One of these, recognised by Antonio Gramsci, was the way in which the organisational aspects of the mechanised and collectivised workshop resulted in an intensified class-consciousness amongst returning soldiers. Curtis (1980) has described how war experience was recast as the mirror-image of the work experience and he notes that, “in the trenches men learned that mechanical destruction and industrial production were mirror images of

³¹⁶ This expression became a familiar element in the political rhetoric of the early 1920s.

³¹⁷ The campaign included hunger strikes and, famously, the suicide of Emily Davidson who threw herself beneath the King’s horse at Epsom, on Derby day, 1913.

each other.”³¹⁸ The demotic rhetoric of factory workplace and trench-war share the vocabulary of effort and production.

The desire to demonise both the enemy and the enemy-within, the slacker, is therefore a characteristic theme. It is the history of this engagement between the polity and the population, mediated by the established and emerging media and articulated through new forms of graphic design, that provide the precedents for the propaganda of WW2 including those addressed specifically to women.

By tracing these precedents and by indicating how a more telling engagement was articulated within the existing, and emerging, channels of communication in the years before WW2 it is possible to re-evaluate the propaganda images of WW2 and to understand them as both the climax of a remarkable period of experimentation in graphic design. They also correspond to the beginnings of co-ordinated media activity in the age of mechanical reproduction. If successful, this re-reading would disabuse, at least within the specific contexts described here, the view that the propaganda images of WW2 marked the end of experiment and the return to a banal, literal and realistic rhetoric of visual communication.

The propaganda images of WW1, produced under the auspices of The Parliamentary Recruiting Committee (PRC), have generally been seen as embodying the worst aspects of a masculine, aggressive and jingoistic value system. This is, in part at least, a cultural legacy of the period

³¹⁸ Barry Curtis (1980) in *Block*, Number 2, p51.

immediately after WW1 when, as the full horror of the war emerged and soldiers returned from the front, the propaganda images associated with the call to arms were repudiated as exaggerated and un-British.

The official tone of WW1 propaganda was set, firstly, by the strict censorship exercised under the terms of the Defence of the Realm Act (1914) and, secondly, by a rhetoric of Imperial Nationalism and an implicit belief in the “English public school ethos.” This ethos emphasised a ruling elite, defined by aristocratic birth and identified as the “officer class,” at the head of a clearly differentiated social hierarchy. The characteristics of address from this elite were, “its authoritarianism and its emphasis on justice, responsibility, stoicism and duty.”

Under these terms, the analysis of the PRC posters has tended to concentrate on their potential success as recruiting posters. They have been described as luring, on the basis of demotic rhetoric, the innocent and young to certain death. In fact, as Philip Dutton (1989) has shown in his *“Moving Images”* the recruiting crisis in the army was, by the time the PRC launched its main drive, more-or-less over.³¹⁹

Within the latter context, the posters may be seen as addressing the home population of wives, mothers, sisters, workers and administrators and as an attempt to maintain the population’s enthusiasm for war in the face of limited military success and depressing news. Dutton’s analysis

³¹⁹ Dutton (1989) in *“Imperial War Museum Review,”* Number 4, p43.



Figure 55. Ministry of Information Home-Front poster

"You Women Can Help Us"

1943

Jonathan Swift Collection

of the poster images classifies them in thematic groups that, in turn, comprise a lexicon of demotic address, “legitimacy, hate, comradeship and adventure, interrogation and intimidation.” Nicholas Hiley (1997) has contributed to the unpicking of our retrospective mythologizing of the PRC posters by detailed contextualisation of the campaign.³²⁰ He has shown that, far from being the product of a unifying if disciplined intelligence, “the PRC posters were often the product of private enterprise motivated by a real, if diverse, form of patriotism.”

The designers of the PRC posters used the commercial techniques of the mass market to address the largest number of people and this contributed to their notoriety, especially retrospectively, and to their questionable effectiveness. The poster had become, in Britain, a mature form of advertising by the end of the 19th century and the public had already developed some skill in resisting its appeals.

Hiley shows that, notwithstanding the retrospective impression of the overwhelming power of the state it was by no means clear that the PRC was effective in its primary objectives. These can only be judged by the recruiting figures that show that, particularly in relation to the enormous size of the poster editions, the campaign was not especially decisive. More complex, and perhaps more effective, was the subtle and indirect pressure exerted through the family.

³²⁰ Hiley (1997) in *Imperial War Museum Review*, “Number 11, p40.

The role of the family, with its emphasis on the female figures of mother, wife and sister, is particularly revealing in terms of the nascent dialogue between state and its women citizens. Retrospectively, the role given to women, as handmaidens to a powerful state apparatus coercing their compliance, gave rise to feeling of guilt and exploitation. These feelings were exacerbated, suggests Caroline Rowan (1984), by the post-WW1 realisation that the state's appropriation of women into the war economy and into its ideological support for the war-effort were temporary, expedient and circumscribed by a set of powerful controlling forces.³²¹ These forces worked on behalf of both the economic and political status quo and effectively balanced working-class women's enfranchisement with a newly configured set of responsibilities in the economic, political and domestic spheres.

The apparatus of the state could then control the emergence of a politically radicalised male and female working-class. It could revert to speaking on its own terms, and by its own means, to its own people. These were the middle classes. The fact is that WW1 propaganda, characterised as it is by demotic rhetoric, betrays its defining class-position by its appeal to values of duty and sacrifice.

The Ministry of Information addressed women using an appeal to a sense of duty that is reminiscent of the propaganda efforts of WW1. The poster illustrated in figure 55 (p248) is a general recruitment poster for the many occupations open to women in the war effort.

³²¹ Rowan (1984) "*For the Duration Only*" in "*Formations of Nation*," p152.

The conscription of women into the armed forces and into war-work during WW2 was the responsibility of Ernest Bevin's Ministry of Labour and National Service. Bevin understood that the production targets required to support to the military and to lead, eventually, to victory would require the mobilisation and integration of women into the industrial workforce.

The major problem, Bevin recognised, was of how to match the degree of industrial organisation already established in Germany and to do so without discarding the democratic traditions of Britain and especially without adopting the totalitarian methods Britain was fighting against. In the end conscription, although allowed, was hardly ever needed.

Alan Bullock has recorded, in his biography of Bevin, the problems attached to this project and the development of Bevin's policy of "voluntaryism" (Bevin's own word) as the strategy to solve it.³²² The strategy developed as an integrated and co-ordinated advance on three fronts, "communication, participation and conditions." Bevin understood that the successful implementation of any plan required effective communication to secure the co-operation of both employers and workforce. Inadequate communication and information was identified as a major obstacle to securing this co-operation. A second obstacle was identified as inadequate participation represented as the failure to give people the chance to contribute and feel involved in decisions.

³²² Bullock (1967) p44.



Figure 56. Photograph of United States women industrial workers
1944
Imperial War Museum

Bevin's solution to this was to extend, at every level from Whitehall to shop-floor, "the principles and practice of consultation." Consultation was established as being on equal terms with all interested parties represented, as being about questions that really mattered and as happening before decisions were made rather than afterwards. By far the most significant obstacle identified by Bevin was the legacy of an industrial outlook that treated workpeople as so many hands, indifferent to their well-being or to any obligation beyond paying them the lowest wages. Bevin insisted that the circumstances of war should provide the basis for the extension of a concern for conditions rather than to retreat from this responsibility.

Bevin's policy was to extend the concept of "industrial health" by securing orders, in July 1940, by which medical personnel were appointed to factories.³²³ He secured the co-operation of the British Medical Association who set up their own committee on Industrial Health in Factories. By the end of 1944, the climax of the productive effort of war production, there were 181 full time doctors in industry and nearly 8,000 nurses.³²⁴ It was natural, and economic, for the medical and welfare facilities in factories to support RoSPA's accident awareness campaign.

The RoSPA posters include a selection of images directed specifically at women workers in the factory. These images date from 1942 through 1944 and are not part of any post-war RoSPA campaign. The designs are by Arnold Rothholz (also AR) and G R Morris. The posters address

³²³ Bullock (1967) p79.

³²⁴ Bullock (1967) p79.



Figure 57. Ministry of Information Home-Front poster by Zec

"Women of Britain

Come into the Factories"

1943

Imperial War Museum

women's safety in relation to tidiness and to the choice of suitable clothing for industrial work. The campaign uses the notion of "cap-smart" to establish a link between being in fashion and a woman having her hair tied up and covered. Accidents involving trapped hair in machinery were not uncommon and were identified as especially upsetting for fellow workers.

The attempt to show women workers by reference to a community of representations was motivated by a desire that such representations should avoid idealisation as much as possible and be grounded in reality. The demotic representation of women during WW1 had idealised a set of female values around representations of idealised womanhood. The RoSPA campaign of WW2 eschews idealisation in favour of reality.

Considering the very significant number of women in the industrial workforce it is slightly surprising that the RoSPA campaign addressed to women didn't extend to more posters. Certainly, the number of posters addressed to women's safety is fewer than that devoted to the subject of eye injury. It should be remembered though that the narrative of women's war work was not conducted only through the posters and representations of RoSPA and the MOI. There were photographic stories and journalism in "*Picture Post*" and films such as "*Millions Like Us*" told of a family's transforming experience of the Home-Front.³²⁵

³²⁵ Almost any wartime issue of "*Picture Post*," especially those after January 1941, will have some such story. Kee (1989) and Hopkinson (1970) offer selections of these famous images. Brown (1977) p107 gives the details of the film.



Figure 58. RoSPA women's industrial safety poster by H A Rothholz

"Be in the Fashion

Cover Your Hair"

1943

Imperial War Museum

It is worth observing that, in America, the productive power of the woman worker was represented through the mythologised figure of “Rosie the Riveter.”

Figure 56 (p252) shows an American photograph of women factory workers. North American propaganda and media reporting chose to show American women working in what had previously been male occupations. The women were presented as surprisingly able and productive. The mythologised figure of “Rosie the Riveter” became a symbol for the economic independence of these women and of their productive power. The welding masks and goggles are probably associated with work in shipyards and give the women a dramatic and unusual appearance.

The political and aesthetic project to give forms to these other voices, whilst accommodating them within the existing communications channels of inter-war Britain, may be seen as a defining logic of graphic experimentation in Britain during the inter-war period.

Several projects can be identified as significant staging posts in the run-up to 1939. We have already seen how, within the context of established advertising for London Transport and Shell petrol, the prevailing desire for good taste and artistic style had been part of a project to limit the spread of advertising. The physical limits of available space also made the entry price of this kind of communication very high. The conditions



Figure 59. RoSPA women's industrial safety poster by G R Morris

"Be in the Fashion

Cover Your Hair"

1944

Imperial War Museum

prevailing during the 1930s were not auspicious for communication addressed to anyone but the middle class.

It is against these prevailing limits that we should judge the various efforts to create a space for a politically engaged visual communication in Britain. There are several key elements that play a part in this story. The first is the creation by Sir Stephen Tallents' to recast Britain's Imperial relations through the Empire Marketing Board and the Empire Film Unit. A second is the creation of Mass Observation (MO) by Tom Harrisson and a third is the publishing of "*Picture Post*."

Both "*Picture Post*" and Tom Harrisson's Mass Observation helped to carve out a space for the articulation of views almost wholly ignored by the established media of the 1920s. Harrisson's project has its origins in the unlikely conjunction of politics and Surrealism. Harrisson realised that, with the advent of universal suffrage, the political elite would require the means of accurately gauging public opinion. He proposed to collect data, for presentation to Whitehall Ministries, from five hundred observers who would record, in subjective diary form, their reactions and views of life.³²⁶

Humphrey Jennings, the Surrealist artist and film-maker, was a co-founder of MO and was probably drawn to the project for its potential in uncovering something of the "collective unconscious" in Britain. Jennings was to express some of these ideas in a series of remarkable wartime

³²⁶ The Mass Observation Archive is held at the University of Sussex.

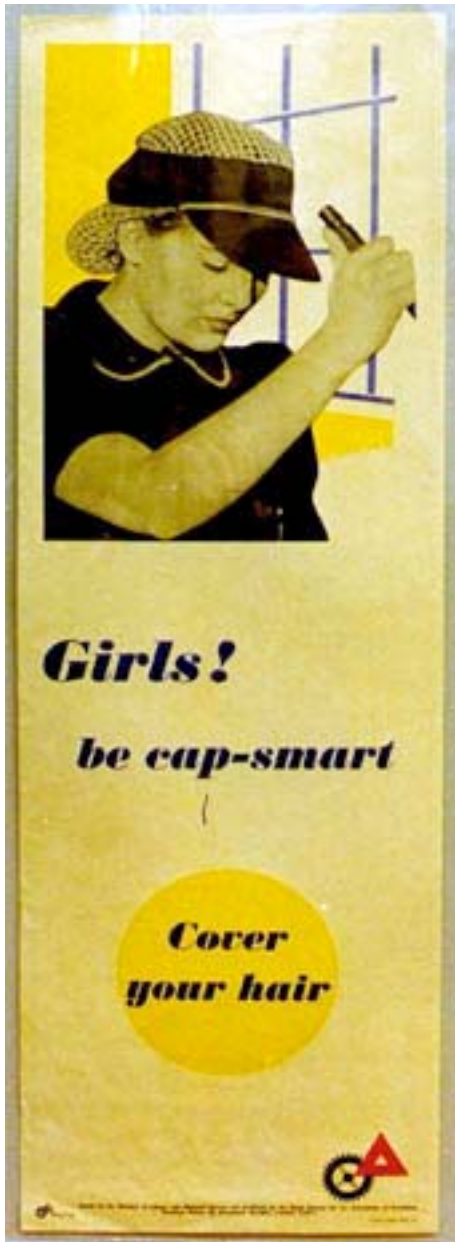


Figure 60. RoSPA women's industrial safety poster (anonymous)

"Girls

Be Cap Smart

Cover Your Hair"

1944

Imperial War Museum

documentary films including *"Listen to Britain."*³²⁷ The interests of MO, grounded as they were in the interests of their observers, helped to develop a new political discourse.³²⁸

In a more literary mode writers such as George Orwell and J B Priestley began to supplement the relentlessly middle-class and "tasteful" documentation of English national identity with something more real, if not entirely alien, dangerous or visceral. It is as part of this process that RoSPA's engagement with a female audience should be judged.

The Imperial War Museum collection includes these RoSPA posters and these are reproduced as figures 58, 59, 60 and 61 (pages 256, 258, 260 and 264). These posters all use photographs of real women rather than drawn representations such as that by Zec for the MOI reproduced as figure 57 (p254).

The representations of women in graphic communications of WW2 take a wide variety of forms. There are posters appealing for recruits to the various services, to the Land Army and also for the general appeal for women to support the men in the services such as in figure 55 (p248). This last has eight women in different uniforms representative of the variety of roles available to women and also expressing the idea of a community, or variety, of women and female roles. This theme is echoed in the RoSPA posters by Rothholz and by Morris. The posters have

³²⁷ The film was released in 1942. See Jennings (1982) p30 and also David Mellor's *"Sketch"* in Jennings (1982) pp63-72.

³²⁸ The revolutionary potential of this new discourse is evidenced by the input of Orwell, Priestley and Wintringham and the creation of a distinctive and patriotic form of English Socialism.

photographic portraits of five and six women workers respectively. This strategy offers the opportunity to show several styles of cap on each poster.

The poster illustrated in figure 57 (p254) is an appeal to the women of Britain to join the productive efforts of wartime factory work. The poster was produced by the Ministry of Information and is typical of the kinds of propaganda, which created a heroically mythologised worker figure to complement that of the fighter. The low point-of-view is characteristic of these kinds of image. A more painterly mythologisation is evident in Dame Laura Knight's painting of a woman factory worker "*Ruby Loftus*" which is in London's Imperial War Museum. The prevailing characteristic of successful female representation during WW2, and in the context of propaganda, is one of documentary. The women are presented as real and as making a contribution to victory through their efforts. The use of photography in the RoSPA posters is telling since it carries with it a truth-value absent from drawn, idealised or mythologised figures.

Figure 58 through 61 (pages 256, 258, 260 and 264) reproduce four of the RoSPA posters aimed at women workers. They are from the campaign aimed at getting women to keep their hair covered in factories as part of a fashion associated with war work, common sense and safety. The RoSPA posters are unusual for their design sophistication and use of montage techniques. The address to women tended, in other propaganda efforts, to be associated with a more heroic characterisation or with an appeal to sentiment.

Figure 60 (p260) shows a RoSPA poster where the design is unaccredited. The use of a photographic element and of the “fat face” type mark it out as advanced graphic design for the period.³²⁹ The use of these early 19th century display types for architectural signage and for poster lettering was suggested as part of the “*Architectural Review’s*” attempt to configure a form of English architecture and design that was both modernist and national.³³⁰ The display types were advocated as part of attempt to find alternatives to the sanserif types that come to dominate the typography of modernism and war-socialism. The use of a seriffed and italicised typography in this poster is especially remarkable for it being a wartime poster. The prevailing typographic style of the war years was of a “service” (army, navy and air force) style of sanserif. This was often painted and often in extended or larger sizes. The association between sanserif letterforms and effective communication had been established in Britain by the success of the typeface designed for London Underground by Edward Johnston in 1916.³³¹ Eric Gill’s sans typeface for the Monotype Corporation (Gill Sans) was a type that could be set entirely by the use of the Monotype machine. The widespread use of the Monotype assured Gill’s letterforms the widest possible audience.

The RoSPA poster’s use of an oversized display type in a self-consciously antique style was testimony to both the design sophistication

³²⁹ The “fat faces” are so-called because of the exaggerated downward stroke in their design. This increases the relative weight of black in the letter. This letter style was developed to serve the display requirements of merchants and traders who required a letter that could be read from a distance. The British tradition of fat face display types is in marked contrast to the German use of black-letter Fraktur type as favoured by Bismark.

³³⁰ See Rennie (2001) for a description of the “*Architectural Review’s*” promotion of a lettering style that became associated with the Festival of Britain of 1951.

³³¹ Johnston’s design was commissioned by Frank Pick.

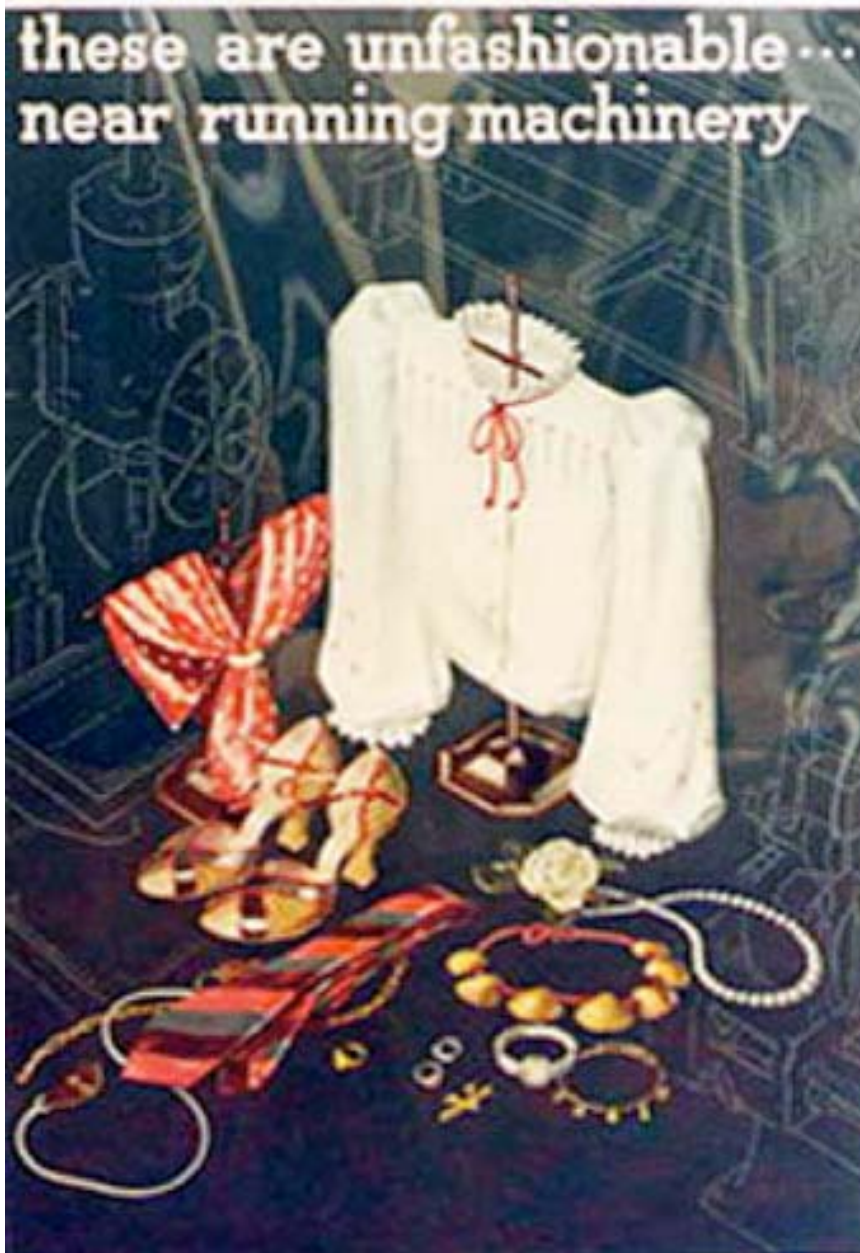


Figure 61. RoSPA women's industrial safety poster (anonymous)

"These are Unfashionable...

Near Running Machinery"

1943

Imperial War Museum

of the campaign and also to the confidence that the designers and their administrators had in their audience.

It is not my intention, within the framework of this project, to describe the full impact of WW2 on the lives of British women and of the potential for emancipation that the war afforded. The economic and social benefits accorded to women in recognition of their contribution to victory has received substantial analysis through writers such as Arthur Marwick and requires no repetition here.³³² More recently, the radicalisation implicit in the popular experience of the war has been questioned in relation to the actual circumstances of people's lives. Summerfield (1984) has examined the wartime experience of women workers and describes the requirement to balance home and work as responsibility forced upon women and avoided by the Ministry.³³³ Summerfield's equivocal findings call into doubt the progressive potential of women's experience during the war. However, the Ministry's efforts to accommodate women's conflicting responsibilities within a framework of "human factor management" deserve recognition as not entirely compromised.

The changes, such as they were, were irreversible and progressive. The RoSPA campaign's images aimed at women reflect this progressive momentum.

³³² See Marwick (1976) pp132-137 and pp138-141. Summerfield (1984) has told the story of British women industrial workers during WW2 in detail and in relation to the conflicting demands of home and country.

³³³ Summerfield (1984) p123.



Figure 62. RoSPA poster by F Kenwood Giles

"Replace That Guard"

1944

Imperial War Museum

RoSPA and Surrealism

Communications and Imagination

The critical tendency to associate the visual language of propaganda with the militaristic and overwhelmingly masculine ideologies of war has had the effect of obscuring any possible subtlety in the language of propaganda. It may therefore seem, at first glance, that the opportunities for subtlety in propaganda are limited. In fact, whilst it is true that a good deal of propaganda is obvious in its message and crude in its execution, a remarkable sophistication may be discerned in some of the British propaganda output of WW2. This is especially true of the RoSPA posters.

We have already begun to examine the links between the visual language of the RoSPA campaign and the wider rhetoric of the Left in Britain up to, and during, the war. This section examines the possible links between some of the RoSPA images and the Surrealist movement in Britain.

RoSPA's declared approach to dealing with subjects that it identified as traumatic was, "to transform the representation of that subject." The Surrealistic potential for transformations are evident in the RoSPA poster illustrated in figure 62 (p266) where the machine tool is presented as an anthroporphised monster that disturbs the resting worker with nightmare visions of the factory. This type of poster, with its evident appeal to

anxiety, is unusual for RoSPA who usually, and as a matter of principle, took an allusive view to the depiction of trauma.

Surrealism was an art movement that emerged in the aftermath of WW1 and has its origins, uniquely, in both literary and artistic circles. The founder of the movement was André Breton; a poet who had worked as a military psychologist during WW1 and had become aware of Freud's writings and theorising about the unconscious. The movement was launched in 1924 with the publication of Breton's "*Manifesto*" in 1924.

Breton defined Surrealism thus, "it is based on the belief of the superior reality of certain forms of association previously neglected."³³⁴ Breton was anxious to emphasise that the kinds of associations identified as Surrealist were, in fact, already established in the psychic reality of our experience of the world. If the contemporary (1920's) world did not recognise this form of perception it was because, Breton suggested, of the classically ordered (rational and scientific) worldview. Surrealism therefore opened up the possibilities of connecting with an equally authentic, if primitive, experience.

The counterpoint between this description of a psychic reality and the comfortable material reality of the suburban metropolis rendered Surrealism a particularly effective means of representation for the developing consumer culture of the 1930s. Herbert Read, writing at the opening of the London Surrealist exhibition in 1936 contrasted

³³⁴ Breton quoted in Jobling and Crowley (1996) p259.

Surrealism with, “the artificial manufacture of a collective organisation.”³³⁵ Read recognised Surrealism as “an international movement.”³³⁶ This is evident from the speed with which Surrealist ideas were spread amongst the avant-garde communities of Europe and America. The Surrealist movement was quick to exploit the potential of cheaper printing to produce documents and magazines. The history of Surrealist journalism or publishing formed the basis of the seminal exhibition “*Dada and Surrealism Reviewed*.”³³⁷

The first official stirrings of Surrealist activity in Britain were timed to coincide with the 1936 exhibition but that is not mean to say that artists and writers had, heretofore, been ignorant of the movement and its ideas. Ades makes the point that a cause of the relatively tardy development of Surrealism in England was the, “very ease with which interested artists could keep in touch with Paris.”³³⁸ It is important to stress, therefore, that the absence of a working Surrealist community in Britain before 1936 in no way signals an intellectual hostility to the project.

Herbert Read made valiant attempts, at the request of his publisher Faber and Faber, to project a poetic tradition of Surrealism that was specifically English.³³⁹ Although Read was personally hostile to the idea of a specifically English form of Surrealism he was conscious of the

³³⁵ Read (1936) p20.

³³⁶ Read (1936) p20.

³³⁷ The catalogue is listed as Ades (1978). The exhibition was held at the Hayward Gallery, London.

³³⁸ Ades (1978) p347.

³³⁹ Ades (1978) p348.



Figure 63. Film-still from "*Un Chien Andalou*"

by Louis Bunuel and Salvador Dali

1930

British Film Institute

powerful ideological potential of Surrealism to recast the prevailing cultural values (hegemony) in Britain so that, “from our point of view, Lear is a better poet than Tennyson; Lewis Carroll has affinities with Shakespeare.”³⁴⁰

The subliminal and the unconscious were taken, by Breton, to reveal a reality beyond the purely physical and, thereby, to allude to a system of meanings that explore the potential gap between physical reality and the representational systems of language and pictures that, hitherto, man has used to describe the world. This, Breton believed, constituted a higher level of perception and, therefore, revealed a greater truth about the psychic construction of reality. Breton hoped to examine, in himself primarily, the poetic potential of “psychic autonomism” and to “represent the unconscious and subconscious workings of the mind.”³⁴¹

Breton constructed a theory of representation around the concept of “compulsive beauty” whereby he proposed that, “every idea, object or being could be transformed into something else by representation.” Breton suggested three means by which “compulsive beauty” could be represented, “the erotic voile, the explosante-fixte and the magique circonstantielle.” The “erotic voile” is the process by which two distinct objects may be revealed within a single, significant, form by superimposition. Man Ray’s famous “*Violon d’Ingres*” from 1924 is an example of this technique. The second process of “explosate-fixte” is that

³⁴⁰ Read (1936) p56.

³⁴¹ The main structuring devices of Surrealism have been expertly summarised by Jobling and Crowley (1996) p260-264.

of arresting movement to reveal a hidden form. The third technique of “magique circonstancielle” is that whereby transformations are triggered by manipulations of the visual representation or through hallucination; set off by the chance encounter with a found object in addition to the more usual routes.

The language of Surrealism is, by its nature, subjective. The trans-substantiations to which the images allude are recognised only in so much that they connect with the viewer’s most obscure and fetishistic desires. It is clear from this last point that the language of Surrealism would find a practical use in the creation of advertising images and in the visual language of consumer society.

There are elements of transformation within the visual language of the RoSPA campaign that, although they are not explicitly identified as Surrealist, belong to these pioneer strategies. The motives for using these strategies in the context of British war propaganda stem from a desire to engage with the audience through the use of humour and to spare that audience the full, alienating, horror of grotesque images of injury and hurt.

There is a long and distinguished tradition of transformation as the bedrock of visual humour and pun. In Britain these kinds of transforming images are to be found in children’s toys from the 19th century and in the drawings of Rex Whistler from the 1930s.

The creation of a relatively sophisticated audience for this kind of visual joke was one of the great achievements of the tradition of artistic advertising in Britain during the 1930s. We have already established how the campaigns of the DIA, London Transport and Shell were dependent on a belief in the intelligence of their audiences. This belief was also a cornerstone of the approach of Fougasse (Kenneth Bird) in the creation of his humorous propaganda posters and in the belief, expressed forcefully by Lord McGowan president of RoSPA that, “a smile will often get more done than a threat of scowl.”³⁴²

Pat Keely’s poster “*Mushroomed Tools*”³⁴³ may be cited as an example of the type of representation where there is a seeming discontinuity between the image of the poster and its message.³⁴⁴ In fact, the poster may be decoded by anyone familiar with the safety practices of factory work. The poster refers to the mushrooming of metal tools that occurs when they are hammered. Best practice is to exchange these tools before the mushrooming causes parts of the metal tool to come away and splinter into the eye. The wearing of safety goggles is also recommended. This is precisely the sort of issue that newcomers to the factory or workplace required to be made familiar to them. Otherwise injury would occur in an entirely preventable set of circumstances.

³⁴² RoSPA Archive, Industrial Service papers (D.266/2/19).

³⁴³ See figure 71 (p292).

³⁴⁴ The question implicit in the poster is what connects tools and mushrooms with each other? An experienced worker would know that “mushrooming tools” are likely to be fragile and constitute a safety risk.



Figure 64. Black and white photographic image by Man Ray

c1930

Estate of Man Ray

There is a further consideration of false economy in continuing to work with damaged tools and also, within this context, a problem of balancing performance and productivity around the requirements for rest and recuperation. It was found, at the beginning of the war, that many injuries occurred when workers attempted to meet production targets by working through tiredness. Productivity levelled off and began to fall past a certain point. At its most urgent, war production was based around the concept of a seven-day working week. This was quickly abandoned in favour of more normal working hours with an emphasis on productivity during the working day.

A further feature of the RoSPA posters that appears to allude to a Surrealist sensibility is what may be referred to as “the language of shadows.” The use of such a device to allude to the fear of accidents would appear normal enough in light of Freud’s writings about the subconscious and its role as a storehouse for repressed anxieties. The RoSPA posters are often framed in black and have a framing device that shows a distant accident or injury. This is obviously both a pictorial convention and a consequence of the printing technology used for the production of the posters.

In printing posters by colour lithography the black is often the last colour to be printed. It has the effect of acting as a key block and will cover any small errors in registration between the other coloured elements of the design. This is important enough in poster designs that have a complex arrangement of different colour printings; but is especially so in the pared

down and economical context of the RoSPA posters where the darker printing acts as a powerful portal to the perception of the image.

Jack Beddington had created an advertising campaign for Shell that used the foremost artists and designers working in Britain with posters supported by newspaper advertising, publishing and filmmaking. The Shell posters are usually associated with landscape views of folly houses and of a neo-romantic sensibility to the associations of history and place. Beddington had, at the same time as commissioning these posters, indulged his own taste for the wit and excitement implicit in Surrealism. The Shell advertising of the 1930s includes several groups of material that may be identified as exploratory interactions with the evolving language of Surrealism.³⁴⁵

There are posters in the “*Conchophiles*” series that are representations of various professional groups who might use Shell products. There are posters for “*Magicians*” and “*Actors*” by Kauffer, for “*Footballers*” by Paul Nash, and for “*Doctors*” by Graham Sutherland. Each of the posters has a symbolic representation of the professional rather than a portrait of the individual. In addition to these symbolic posters Shell also commissioned topsy-turvy illusions from Rex Whistler and illustrations for newspaper advertising by Edward Bawden to go with John Betjeman’s punning rhymes such as “*Blandford Forum – But Shell for Us, Everywhere You*

³⁴⁵ The Shell posters were amongst the first to make use of symbolism of experience to represent user groups of their products. See Hewitt (1998) for numerous illustrations of these posters (not paginated).

*Go, You Can be Sure of Shell.*³⁴⁶ The Shell campaigns helped to develop a tradition of wit in graphic design that is particularly English.³⁴⁷ The transformations, juxtapositions and word-play of the campaign were closely linked to the game-playing of the Surrealists and were the beginnings of a process by which parts of the visual language of Surrealism were appropriated by the advertising industry.

Beddington was probably the foremost pioneer of the properly integrated media campaign up to and including the period of WW2. Beddington was successful in finding a role within the MOI – eventually ending up as head of the film unit. It was there that Beddington was able, with the help of the pioneer Surrealist and filmmaker Humphrey Jennings, to make a unique contribution to the development of visual language in Britain.

It is not surprising that the visual techniques of Surrealism should find a natural ally within the world of filmmaking. The transformative potential of moving images had been the subject of experimentation by avant-gardists during the 1930s – both in the field of films and also in the creation of automated constructions. These constructions came to life in the animated films where they combined a level of visual sophistication, by reference to Surrealism, with an anthropomorphised simplicity that made the images and stories accessible to all.³⁴⁸

³⁴⁶ The Bawden drawings are included in *“Shell on the Road”* (no date but circa 1930) and in the exhibition catalogue *“That’s Shell That Was”* (1982).

³⁴⁷ For an analysis of wit in British graphic design see McAlhone and Stewart (1996) which identifies the antecedents of contemporary wit in graphic design and advertising amongst a range of historical precedents. These include Victorian puzzle pictures and rebus rhymes.

³⁴⁸ The role of Surrealist animators and constructors in the development of the visual language of television at the BBC during the 1950s has yet to be comprehensively told.



Figure 65. RoSPA poster by H A Rothholz

"Wrong Right"

1944

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

The history of the Surrealist movement in Britain has been expertly told by Remy (1999). He traces the development of the movement in Britain from the discovery within the Parisian avant-garde, by Roland Penrose, of the poets, writers and artists around Breton. Remy presents the subsequent story as one of Anglo-French cultural exchange. Remy has identified the following themes as specific to British Surrealism, “a questioning of logic and rationalism, a questioning of natural form, an openness to myth and a systematic probing of the unconscious.”³⁴⁹

It was through Roland Penrose that the Surrealist Exhibition took place in Britain during 1936.³⁵⁰ The exhibition was planned by André Breton and Paul Eluard in France; together with Roland Penrose and Herbert Read in England. An organising committee was established which included such disparate personalities as Man Ray, McKnight Kauffer and Paul Nash. The exhibition was carefully planned in terms of its staging and in the management of press and publicity. Some 1,200 people attended the opening at the New Burlington Gallery on 11th June 1936.³⁵¹ The displays included a wide variety of work, “360 collage works, paintings and sculptures, 30 primitive and ethnographic artefacts, objets trouvés, children’s drawings and Surrealist objects.”³⁵² The Exhibition was a great success attracting over 23,000 visitors and an amount of outraged press comment. In addition there were several satellite events such as film shows at the London Film Society where Bunuel and Dali’s “*Un Chien Andalou*” (1930) was shown. The Exhibition can rightly be credited with

³⁴⁹ Remy (1999) p125.

³⁵⁰ Roland Penrose (1900-1984) artist and photographer, Surrealist and friend of Picasso.

³⁵¹ Remy (1999) p76.

³⁵² Remy (1999) p78.



Figure 66. Black and white photograph by Hans Bellmer
1930s
Tate Modern

introducing the concepts of Surrealism to a wider audience and making the movement more widely known, if notorious, in Britain. The subsequent appropriation of Surrealist strategies by the advertising and marketing industries would not have been possible without this pioneering display.

The visual language of Surrealism had been defined during the 1920s and 30s by artists working in Europe. It is not clear how widely known these images would have been outside metropolitan London. The Surrealist Exhibition of 1936 in London was certainly a landmark in presenting these, hitherto, avant-garde ideas to a wider public in Britain. The films of Humphrey Jennings and the other documentary makers would also have played a part in familiarising the public with the strategies of juxtaposition that are characteristic of Surrealism. The London Film Society would also have played an important role in making international work available in London.

“Un Chien Andalou” has an ambiguous narrative structure and was unlike anything previously seen by the public or produced by the mainstream film industry. The opening sequence is notorious and shows the apparent mutilation of an eye. A still from this sequence is reproduced as figure 63 (p270). This sequence is so redolent of the RoSPA images directed at eye injuries that it is impossible to think that this was unknown to the RoSPA designers. The Surrealist film would have been known to members of the London Film Society and to those



Figure 67. RoSPA poster by Pat Keely

"Keep Your Guard On"

1944

Imperial War Museum

artists, such as McKnight Kauffer and Hans Schleger, who associated themselves with the Surrealist grouping and networks in London. Both Kauffer and Schleger were connected to RoSPA before WW2 and were employed by the printers Lund Humphries whose gallery was located in Bedford Square, WC1. The gallery played a significant role in introducing the Surrealist potential of photography to designers.

Whilst the Surrealist Exhibition attracted press comment beyond London it remained a fundamentally metropolitan concern.³⁵³ Indeed, whilst Surrealist imagery was successfully incorporated into the contemporary visual language of Britain the activities of the artist members of the movement remained on the periphery of the art world. That is in no way intended to diminish the influence of such avant-garde work; only to suggest that its significance is greater with hindsight. The British Surrealists were introduced to a significantly wider and more diverse audience through the efforts of the Artists' International and through the work of the GPO Film Unit.

The Artists' International (AIA) had been established in 1933 as a political organisation to mobilise artists and present their work as socially engaged and politically relevant.³⁵⁴ The organisation enjoyed a diverse membership; not all of whom were card-carrying members of the Communist or Labour parties. The advent of the Spanish Civil War in 1936 marked a high point in the political activism of the AIA in Britain.

³⁵³ The "*Manchester Evening News*" railed against "its meaninglessness." Quoted in Remy (1999) p76.

³⁵⁴ The founders of the AIA were Pearl Binder, James Boswell, James Fitton, Misha Black and Cliff Rowe. See Morris and Radford (1983) pp8-10.



Figure 68. RoSPA poster by Rapier

"These Bite

Keep Them Caged"

1944

Imperial War Museum

The political consciousness raising effect of the war in Spain was reflected in the 40,000 visitors who attended the AIA exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery, London in 1939. The British Surrealists were able, like the Mass Observers, to join the Artists' International and to participate in their travelling exhibitions beyond London. The political origins of AIA focussed their activities, like "*Picture Post*," on parts of the population hitherto ignored by the cultural establishment.

The favoured symbols of Surrealism, hand and eye, were naturally at the centre of the RoSPA campaign. It is not surprising, given the history of the movement's development in Britain, that the RoSPA designers should make extravagant use of Surrealist imagery in their posters. The RoSPA strategy of allusion, of not showing things directly, along with the desire to use humour to effect change all lent themselves to the successful use of Surrealist strategies in design. Furthermore, by 1940 the symbolic language of Surrealism had become sufficiently widely known for the designers to have confidence in its effectiveness. The evocation of works by Man Ray in the poster by Arnold Rothholz, below, and in the imagery of Bunuel in the various eye injury posters is testimony to the sophistication of the evolving graphic language of which the RoSPA posters are part.

The most evident manifestations of a Surrealist visual language were to be found, by the end of the 1930s, in the pages of fashion magazines. Illustrated magazines had been widely established since the end of the 19th century but the inter-war period saw the development of a

photographically driven art-direction that attempted to give the picture elements in the magazines a clear sense of narrative direction. In fashion this was associated with fantasy whereas in magazines such as "*Picture Post*" the narratives were constructed around values of social-realism.

The development of a visual language of fantasy was driven by Surrealist artists such as Man Ray, one of whose photographs is illustrated in figure 64 (p274), and of the French designer Jean Cocteau. Ray visited London at the beginning of the 1930s and an exhibition of his work was held at the Lund Humphries gallery in Bedford Square.

The photographer Man Ray produced a series of photographs of artist's models. These were well known and obviously provide the inspiration of Arnold Rothholz's RoSPA poster illustrated as figure 65 (p278).

The RoSPA posters manifest, in both their graphic style and in the constructions of their allusive meanings, a clear derivation from Surrealist experiments in Britain preceding the war. The network of contacts described hitherto indicates a familiarity with these experiments and also of an awareness, amongst image-makers and public alike, of a language of dreams within the nightmare context of war.

The Franco-German Surrealist artist Hans Bellmer³⁵⁵ began to experiment, during the 1930s, with a series of disturbing images of broken doll figures. Bellmer's experiments were part of a widespread fascination, amongst Surrealists, with the concept of malaise and horror

³⁵⁵ Hans Bellmer (1902-1975).

as potential vehicles for a kind of disconcerting seduction. The Surrealists understood the compelling nature of repugnance and anxiety within human desire. The association between Bellmer's photograph illustrated as figure 66 (p280) and the potential victims of accident and injury are clear and point to a sophisticated use of imagery within the RoSPA campaign.

The RoSPA posters eschew the explicit depictions of the Bellmer images as a matter of principle. The connection between Bellmer and the RoSPA posters is about a psychological fascination. The foregrounding of this psychic reality, implicit in the RoSPA posters, is a powerful support to the attempt to emphasise the behavioural responsibilities in safe factory practice.

The exact sources of the emerging visual language that supported the Social-Democratic project in Britain were necessarily beyond the knowledge of the political establishment. Figures 67, 68 and 69 (pages 282, 284 and 288) show RoSPA and safety posters that use the visual language of Surrealism.³⁵⁶

We should, however, be cautious of claiming that the RoSPA designers were Surrealists themselves. The history of the English Surrealists suggests that whilst the image making strategies and the playfulness of Surrealism was quickly taken up within commercial design; the official group within the international movement remained firmly within the avant-

³⁵⁶ Figure 69 by Lewitt and Him commissioned by General Stammers Ltd.



Figure 69. Safety poster by Jan Lewitt and George Him (Lewitt-Him) for General Stampers Ltd

"If You Can't Grow Fingers

Grow Careful"

1943

Imperial War Museum

garde. Nevertheless, the RoSPA posters offer sufficient correspondences with the visual language of the Surrealists to suggest that the themes and methodology of Surrealism were recognised as having a wider potential in the visual communication of values and ideas in Britain.

The successful, if limited, conjunction between RoSPA and the Surrealist movement in Britain is not without irony. The RoSPA campaign might easily be seen as part of a broad social-realist project that would be necessarily hostile, “to the ideas and fancies of Surrealism.” The conjunction of these two, usually antagonistic, strands of ideas is testimony to the pragmatism of RoSPA and its designers and to the complexities of Modernist syntheses in Britain.



Figure 70. RoSPA poster by G R Morris

"Protect Your Eyes"

1943

Imperial War Museum

RoSPA and the Left

Communicating Utopia

The RoSPA posters include a group of images directed at a concern for the high incidence and medical complexities of eye injury. These images take several forms and focus on the need for proper, trained, first aid and for the need to wear protective goggles to ward off flying shards from tools and machinery.

The posters which deal with the problem of eye injury by reference to goggles do so by showing the cracked lenses of the protective glasses and by implying the potential damage that might have occurred to the eye – a soft, sensitive and fragile tissue. These posters are particularly interesting for two reasons. The first is in their allusion to injury by reference to the consequence upon protective material. These images exemplify the strategy of communication that stresses that, “horror’s lesson is distasteful shock.”³⁵⁷ The strategy is a choice, instead, to approach the subject obliquely. The second is in the possible connection, in terms of visual language, with the emerging and international symbolism of such imagery with Left politics.

“Protect Your Eyes” by G R Morris from 1944, reproduced as figure 70 (p290), use the full visual impact of the broken glasses to dramatic effect. The use of photography, as opposed to illustration, also evokes the

³⁵⁷ Bird (Fougasse) (1946) p43.

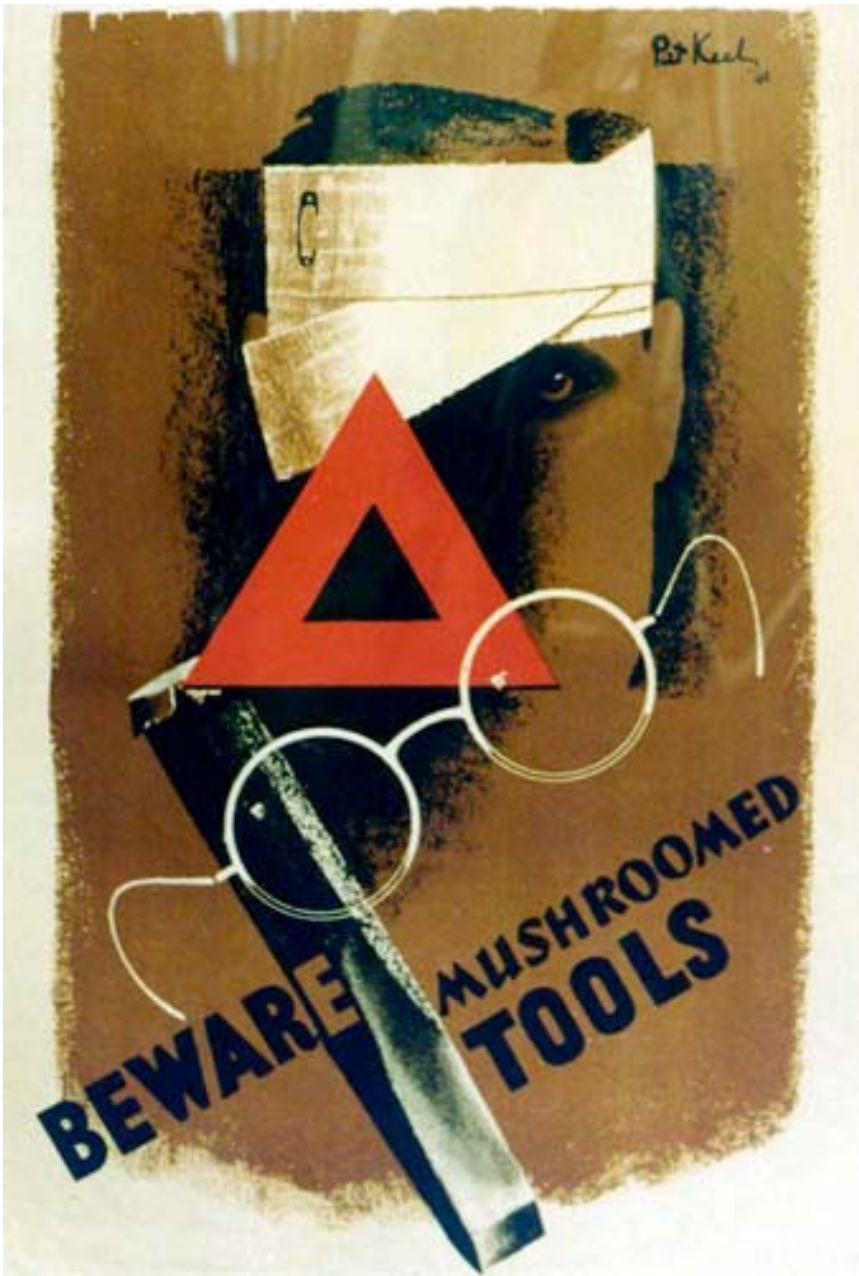


Figure 71. RoSPA poster by Pat Keely

"Beware Mushroomed Tools"

1942

Imperial War Museum

documentary realism, or truth-value, associated with that medium and with the social-realist tendency of the Left. The broken glasses may be taken to refer, in the Morris poster, to the famous and iconic *Odessa Steps* sequence in Eisenstein's "*Battleship Potemkin*" from 1926. The reference between the safety goggles and Eisenstein is made again in Pat Keely's poster, figure 71 (p292). This shows safety goggles skewed in a similar way as those of the nurse in Eisenstein's film.³⁵⁸

The relation between the photographic and the cinematic is especially close and it is impossible not to believe that Morris was drawing special attention to this similarity to make a political point. The use of red ink, to print the title "*Protect Your Eyes,*" is attention grabbing and politically pointed. Red was the colour associated with the worker-control of the Communists and of the political Left. Furthermore, the close-cropped image of the face – showing only the eye and the glasses – serves the purpose of transforming the image into one that is symbolic as well as actual. The cropped image necessarily alludes to a world beyond the frame; to a bigger picture and a more dramatic narrative constructed by reference to the reportage style of art-direction favoured by the new photojournalism of the 1930s. An obvious depth-of-field effect draws attention to the safety goggles, by their being in sharp focus, and creates a dramatic three-dimensional impression.

This impression is made more powerful by the manually overworked background of facial features. The addition of hand drawn marks in these

³⁵⁸ Illustrated as figure 72 (page 296).

photographically derived posters is quite usual in the early history of photomechanical reproduction. Indeed, the early Soviet experimentation with photographic construction within graphic design during the 1920's is remarkable for having taken place within a technological context that was almost entirely 19th century.³⁵⁹ As a consequence of this absence of technology, the photographic elements were drawn by hand. Even in the rotogravure images produced in Switzerland by Herbert Matter, working in a technologically advanced and sophisticated print environment, are distinguished by the close proximity of hand marks and photographic elements within designs that read, from a distance, as entirely photographically derived.

The use of photography in poster design was contingent on the development of half-tone blocks. These were the means by which the grey tones of photographic images could be accurately transferred to the black-and-white medium of lithography. The half-tone process was first developed in the last quarter of the 19th century. Its early use was circumscribed by the crudity of the screens that made large-scale enlargements, as would be required in any poster form, virtually impossible. The space around and between the tone dots would be enlarged in the same way as the dots and would tend, therefore, to draw attention to the space in the image and to the fragmentary nature of the image thus reproduced. An early example of the use of photographic elements in poster design is to be found in some of the propaganda images produced during WW1. These remained the exception rather

³⁵⁹ For a detailed explanation of the Soviet context see Lupton (1998) p51.

than the rule. The Morris poster would, by its use of photography, have distinguished itself from its contemporaries in terms of both form and content.

This section presents a group of RoSPA images that make use of the developing visual rhetoric of the Left in Britain and abroad. The section begins with the introduction of Sergei Eisenstein and of his film masterpiece before looking returning to the RoSPA posters.



Figure 72. Film-still from "*Battleship Potemkin*" by Sergei Eisenstein
1929
British Film Institute

Eisenstein and “*Potemkin*”

The Russian film director Sergei Eisenstein developed a film language that was particularly well suited to the presentation of the dramatic history of Russia. One of his greatest films is “*Battleship Potemkin*” of 1926. The Odessa steps sequence from “*Potemkin*” is one of the most famous in film history. The still reproduced in figure 72 (p296) shows the screaming nurse moments before her death. This image has become an iconic representation of popular struggle. Figure 73 (p298) shows a photographic portrait of Sergei Eisenstein.

Eisenstein’s film was commissioned to mark the anniversary of the unsuccessful revolution of 1905. Eisenstein had intended his film to be wide-ranging dramatisation of the events of that uprising and its brutal suppression. He began filming in March of 1925 and was forced, by bad weather, to move to Baku and then to Odessa. The filming in Odessa provided an opportunity for Eisenstein to recast his project and he reworked the organisation of the film into a specific exemplification of the mutiny, and its suppression, to effect a “powerful encapsulation” of the essence of the revolutionary events of 1905.

Nicholas Reeves has summarised the action of the film thus, “the film opens with an examination of the conditions aboard ship that have driven the men to revolt. One sailor, Vakulinchuk, plays a key role in the mutiny, but just at the point when the Tsarist officers have been overcome, he is killed. His body is laid out in Odessa and, as more and more people



Figure 73. Photographic portrait of Sergei Eisenstein
1930s
British Film Institute

come out to pay their respects to the revolutionary hero and to show solidarity with their comrade sailors and the dead hero, the authorities reassert their control – the citizens gathered on the stone steps of the town are massacred by the ranks of the Tsarist military. The ‘Potemkin’ turns its guns on to Odessa. In the conclusion the battleship sails towards the rest of the squadron and, when they eventually meet, the sailors on all the other ships greet their revolutionary comrades with joyful solidarity. ‘Potemkin’ sails to freedom.”³⁶⁰

The importance of Eisenstein’s film in shaping the evolving formal structures and visual rhetoric of Left, not to say Communist, propaganda rest in Eisenstein’s refusal to engage the audience through the actions of a single central and heroic character. It was, therefore, crucial to Eisenstein’s project to kill off the hero sailor and replace him with a symbolic revolutionary class – the sailors.

The enduring image of Tsarist oppression, created by Eisenstein, is the ranks of soldiers who turn on the citizens of Odessa. They are presented as an anonymous, savage and robotic force. The confrontation between the soldiers and the crowd is orchestrated, as the crown begins to descend the steps, by contrasting the anonymous military with individuals in the crowd. One of the most striking and memorable images from the Odessa steps sequence is of the nurse, pushing a baby and pram, being attacked and of the pram leaving her grip and falling down the stairs. The steps connect the high town, home of the bourgeoisie with

³⁶⁰ Reeves (1999) p71.

the dockside harbour area of the working class. The baby is understood to be a precious bourgeois charge and a great responsibility. This informs the look of panic and anguish on the nurse's face. The nurse is shot in the eye and is shown, screaming, with her spectacles smashed and broken over her face. She becomes the symbol of a working class ruthlessly kept in its place.

It was an axiom of Marxism that a truly proletarian society would produce its own proletarian culture, distinguished as much by the form of its cultural products as by their content. Eisenstein's "*Potemkin*" was amongst the first indications of the emergence of a new and exciting film culture in post-revolutionary Russia.

The impact of Eisenstein's films abroad was immense and immediate. "*Potemkin*" was widely shown in Germany where it enjoyed both critical and commercial success. Kristin Thompson has noted that *Potemkin* was the most successful film in Germany during the 1925/26 season and that, beyond Germany, the film was shown in some 38 countries.³⁶¹ In each of these, even in the USA, the film enjoyed huge popular success in addition to the positive critical reaction of the, Left-leaning, intelligentsia. The painter Francis Bacon, who produced his famous "*Screaming Nurse*" portrait in 1956, remembers first watching "*Potemkin*" during 1935.³⁶²

Just how close the convergent worlds of cinema, photography, graphic design and of the Left intelligentsia were was recently described in the

³⁶¹ Kristin Thompson's "*Eisenstein's Early Films Abroad*" in Christie and Taylor (1993).

³⁶² Francis Bacon was a member of the London Film Society.

notices of Helen Muspratt's death. Muspratt was a partner in the Oxbridge photographic studios of Ramsay & Muspratt and, during 1937, married the Labour activist Jack Dunman. In 1937 she was invited to address the members of the Professional Photographers Association at their Harrogate conference of 1937. She did so by screening the full length "*Potemkin*."³⁶³

It is certain that the design establishment in London, such as it was, knew of Eisenstein's films. The documentary film movement in Britain, founded by John Grierson and supported throughout the 1930s by various state and commercially funded ventures, looked to the avant-garde model of Soviet film making in its attempt to configure a film language of publicity, education and communication. The notoriety of Eisenstein's films and the iconic nature of their imagery was well known beyond London too. Jobling and Crowley have remarked that, by the early 1930s, "a steady flow of ideas and images from the Soviet Union and from Germany were being absorbed into Britain."³⁶⁴ The RoSPA posters substantiate the claim that Modernist ideas found root in England.

³⁶³ In "*The Independent*," 2nd August, 2001. Obituary notice by Val Williams.

³⁶⁴ Jobling and Crowley (1996) p130.

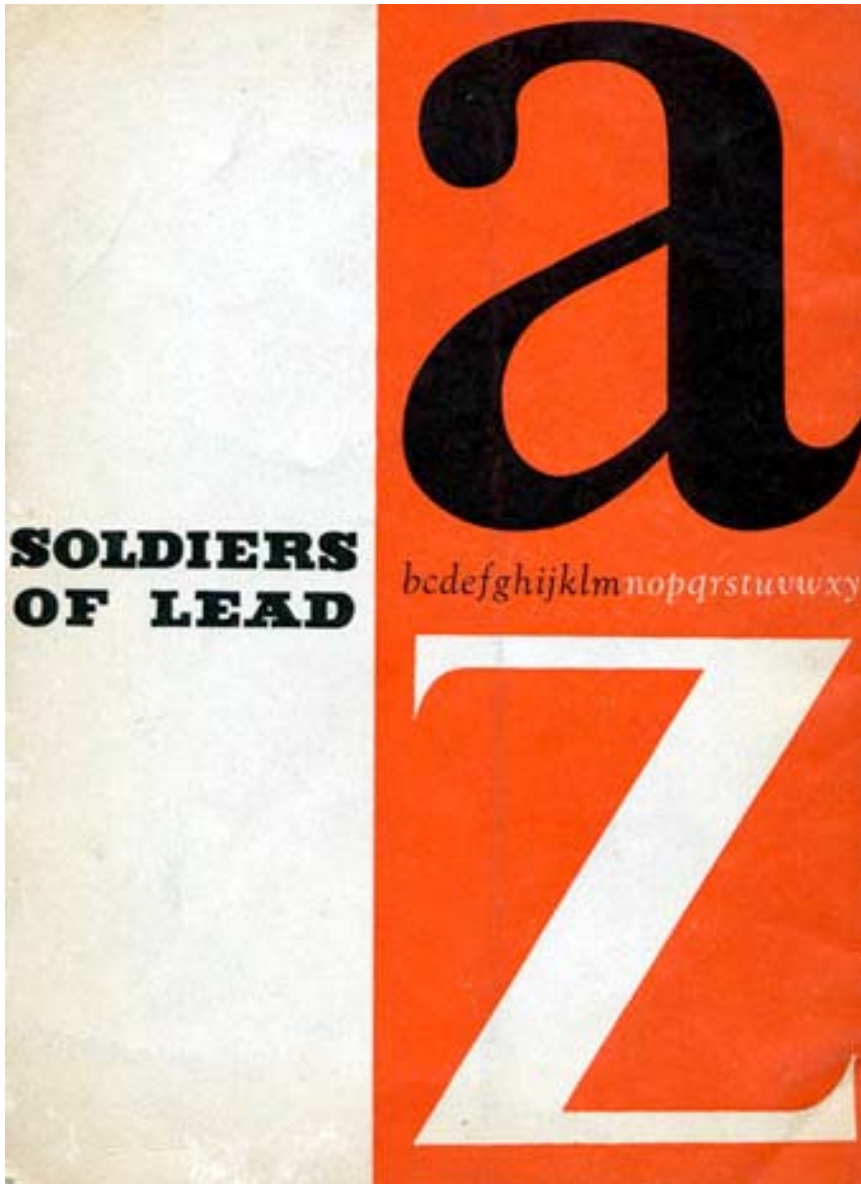


Figure 74. "Soldiers of Lead" published by the Labour Party

1948

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

Graphic Design and the Left in Britain

The advent of *"Picture Post"* was just one of the opportunities that presented itself, at the end of the 1930s, for graphic design to express broadly Left-wing (Social-Democratic) views.

Harold Wadman, writing in the 1937 issue of *"Typography"* noted that, "latter-day capitalism has called into being an enormous machine of commercial propaganda, which is manned very largely by clever young men who are Socialists. They are interesting and dangerous...their posters and pamphlets for the Left must be held partly responsible for the fact that the younger people of England are taking an interest in politics and they are all travelling in the same direction."³⁶⁵

Wadman's was a call-to-arms directed at conservative interests to embrace the benefits of presentation. It is recognition of the common enough observation that the Left, the Modern and the intellectual class are somehow synonymous.

The intellectual discontent identified by Orwell in 1941 found expression through a variety of channels, including the RoSPA campaign, as a call for radical change. The revolutionary potential of these images is constrained by the obviously self interested re-positioning of middle and worker class interests. The anxiety of conservative interests was submerged, for the duration of war, by the demands for change and the

³⁶⁵ Wadman (1937) *"Left Wing Layout"* in *"Typography,"* Number 3, p25.

requirements of speed and planning. The distinction between commercial art and graphic design which emerges at the end of the 1930s and in the propaganda activities of WW2 positions the design activity as part of the emerging managerial, or technocratic, activities that characterise a society in which the potential of its people is more effectively harnessed. Perhaps the most important conduit for Modernist and progressive ideas in graphic design was the printing firm of Percy Lund Humphries, of Leeds, who had offices in Bedford Square, London. These offices were remodelled, during the 1930s, to incorporate an exhibition space and became a meeting place for the design establishment, Modern branch, in London. We have already identified this network of personalities in relation to RoSPA's Publicity Committee and to the Surrealist movement in Britain.

The obvious similarity between Eisenstein's nurse with her smashed spectacles and the images of the broken goggles in the RoSPA posters point to the emergence of this particular image as an emotive and powerful symbol of both class solidarity and worker resistance. The revolutionary nature of the Communist political agenda, with its emphasis on international solidarity and its project to export the revolution beyond the Soviet Union, had given its propaganda images, in all their forms, a more-or-less international currency. Other designers used the idea too, notably Pat Keely, and we must assume that he and G R Morris, were confident that their audience would understand its symbolism and also accept its literal meaning.

The exact nature of how this imagery was appropriated and used can only be guessed at. We know nothing of Morris as a designer beyond the remarkable images that he produced for RoSPA. Their use of photography and the Modernist rhetoric of their design imply that he was more than familiar with the ideas of the Bauhaus and of European functionalist Modernism. Surprisingly, his work disappears after WW2 and it is, therefore, possible that he dropped out of professional graphic design.

In addition to the flow of creative and aesthetic ideas from the Soviet Union there was also an important dialogue between the Communist Party in Britain and its Soviet and Continental comrades. In such a context it is entirely probable that the avant-garde imagery of Eisenstein was well known to workers in Britain, at least those with Communist Party membership. The battle to give visible form to the set of progressive ideas associated with social change was not simply an ideological debate between the various factions. The discussion ranged, in a reflection of its desire to engage with the newly enfranchised elements of the population, over a wide set of cultural elements. The full range of these tensions, in Britain, has been explored in Dick Hebdige's *"Towards a Cartography of Taste."*³⁶⁶

Hebdige explains how, in the context of British class relations, the progressive ideal of ever greater engagement with the population is undermined by a fear, ably and succinctly described by Evelyn Waugh

³⁶⁶ Hebdige (1981) p39.

that affluence and education would, ultimately, fulfil the promise of democracy by, “removing the fact of difference; which alone confers value.”³⁶⁷ Waugh described this project of engaging with a wider audience as a levelling down and likened the world, in the end, as being “flat as a map.” Harold Nicolson notes in his wartime diary that he had been confronted by Aneurin Bevan who claimed that, “the intellectuals are in a difficult position; their tastes attract them to the past, their reason to the future.”³⁶⁸

Clement Attlee also expressed a similar view, from the people’s perspective, as a possible explanation for his post-war election victory, “I think the general feeling was that they (the people) wanted a new start. We were looking towards the future. The Tories were looking towards the past.”³⁶⁹ The difference in outlook is neatly shown in the contrast between Newbould’s “*Your Britain*” poster of the “*South Downs*” and in the symbolic poster for “*Housing*” designed by Abram Games which shows new social housing, in a Modernist style, emerging from the ruins of 19th century slums.³⁷⁰ The two sets of ABCA posters reflect the articulation of Modernism as a paradoxical series of antinomies, or dialectical opposites, that represent the class positions and privileges that it sought to protect and those that it sought to promote.

WW2 was a defining period in the evolution of the political Left in Britain.

At the beginning of the war the Communist Party was opposed to

³⁶⁷ Waugh (1957) in his “*Ordeal of Gilbert Pinfold*.”

³⁶⁸ Nicolson (1967) p192.

³⁶⁹ Attlee speaking in September 1965. Quoted in Hennessey (1992) p67.

³⁷⁰ See figures 16 and 17 (pages 78 and 80).

aggression against Germany on the basis of the non-aggression pact between Hitler and Stalin. In consequence the Party membership in Britain was reviled by the political establishment and by its fellow, but non-Communist, worker colleagues. There was a real fear that Communist agitators would, with their highly developed sense of Marxist theory and of class-war, begin a campaign of sabotage and disruption. In fact, as Ian McLaine has described, worker agitation was almost always a reaction to poor working conditions and, “whatever Government fears, hardly ever the result of Communist fifth-columnists.”³⁷¹

The Ministry of Information, charged as it was with the management of relations between the War Ministries and the media, was the obvious site of the consequences of this high-level ideological confusion towards the extreme Left. The MOI began by adopting a non-confrontational policy towards Communist publications in the hope of keeping them on-side and nurturing a patriotic consensus. This policy came under pressure when, under orders from the Home Secretary, various Communist publications were banned for export, including the “*Daily Worker*.” The Communist daily was eventually suppressed in December 1940, despite there being no direct evidence of its disruptiveness, after MI5 and other security interests had pressed their claims upon the Home Secretary.

In a weekly report from Mass Observation to MOI, it was suggested that, “it would be a mistake to attribute an attitude of hostility to the owners and indifference to the war to Communist machinations. On the contrary,

³⁷¹ McLaine (1979) pp186-216.

these disruptive elements are relatively more effective among the miners than among other industrial workers precisely because wages, working conditions and industrial relations gives them more scope.”³⁷²

Working conditions and labour relations were strictly the responsibility of Ernest Bevin’s Ministry of Labour and National Service. Bevin was sure, in his own mind at least, that Communist sympathisers had had no serious effects on production and was strongly opposed to any direct action to suppress Communists on the shop floor. He actively pursued a policy of improving working conditions with the objective, thereby, of resolving disputes at source and, in the longer term, of bringing together worker and owner interests. It is into this framework of radical, but not revolutionary, policy that Bevin’s appropriation of the RoSPA campaign must be understood. Angus Calder has described Bevin as, “embodying and speaking for and to the working class.” If Churchill spoke of Drakes and Nelson it was Bevin who, as JB Priestley remarked, “spoke for the other half of the English people.”³⁷³

Hennessy (1992) has explained how, as part of the popular narrative of WW2, there occurred a sea-change in the political mood of the country.³⁷⁴ This, he believes was the beginning of a popular consensus that formed the basis for the post-war settlement, “the philosophical and political tide began to turn in May-June 1940 when Labour entered the War Coalition under Churchill as premier. Insofar as a single person can

³⁷² Quoted in McLaine (1979) p193 and dated June 1941. The MO reports were referred to as “*Home Intelligence*.”

³⁷³ Quoted in Hennessy (1992) p70 and taken from Priestly (1940) “*Postscripts*.”

³⁷⁴ Hennessy (1992) p67.

symbolise a change, that figure was the looming presence of Ernest Bevin, General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers' Union, the incarnation of organised labour and the new Minister of Labour and National Service."³⁷⁵

Hennessy then describes Bevin's project as, "wanting the trade unions to be recognised as a great and permanent estate of the realm." Furthermore he notes that the co-occurrence of this project and of the change of political mood was no accident. Bevin's colleague on the "*Daily Herald*," Francis Williams, recalls that, "Bevin began his ministerial career with great energy and with the combined aims of mobilising national manpower – and women power – for war to a degree and with an efficiency far exceeding that of any dictatorship, and at the same time to recast values and permanently alter the status of the industrial worker."³⁷⁶

What Bevin had understood, as a strategic consequence of the war, was that the role of government would be changed. The interventions of government, both routine and extraordinary, during the experience of the Home-Front were, by the standards of the 1930s, remarkable. The population began to accept and to expect a degree of intervention when things needed to be done. Bevin's appropriation of the RoSPA campaign therefore puts these posters at the heart of the political and social project of the Home-Front. Perhaps, given this significance, it is not so surprising

³⁷⁵ Hennessy (1992) pp67-68.

³⁷⁶ Williams quoted in Hennessy (1992) p69.

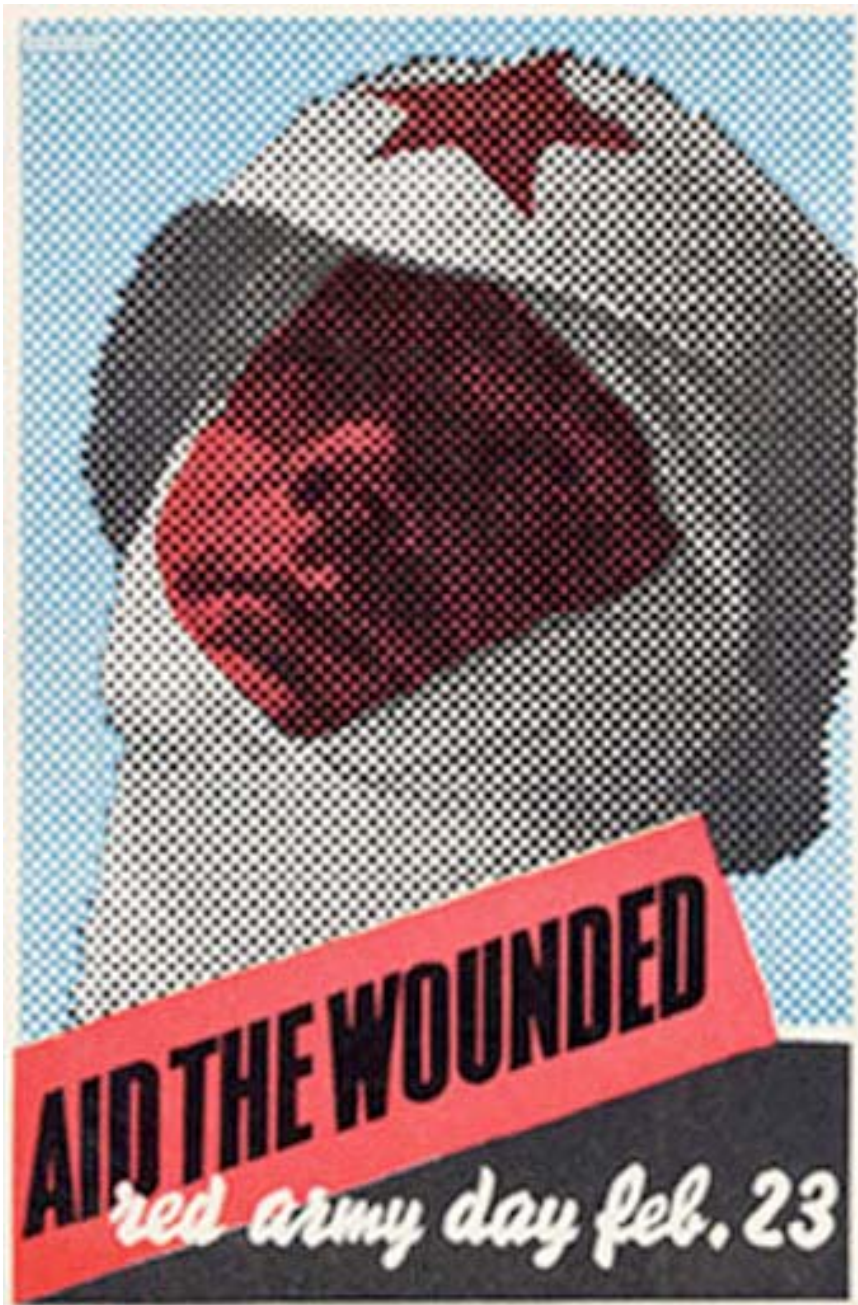


Figure 75. Ministry of Information Russian solidarity poster
by F H K Henrion

"Aid the Wounded"

1944

Paul and Karen Rennie Collectio

that the design of some of the posters embody the progressive values of both Left politicians and of Modernist graphic design.

Notwithstanding Bevin's presence at the Ministry of Labour it is fair to say that relations between the British Left and the Whitehall establishment remained strained. The existing relations were brought to a dramatic and unexpected end by the surprise invasion of Russia by German troops in June 1941. The Soviet people were, in consequence, suddenly transformed into heroic comrades and a political campaign for support found expression in the concept of worker solidarity with special fund raising events and collections throughout the country.

The most famous of these events was held at the Albert Hall in 1943. FHK Henrion designed a poster for this entitled "*Aid the Wounded*" (see figure 75 p310). The hall was draped in huge Soviet flags and it must have seemed, briefly, that the workers had finally taken control. Another poster, from the RoSPA campaign, urged the women workers of Britain to emulate their Russian sisters in both their efforts and in the wearing of protective headscarves (see figure 76 p312).

The Henrion poster is interesting in the exaggerated use of the half-tone dot as a decorative and symbolic element in the design. The dot pattern becomes symbolic in it drawing attention to the technological and mechanical means of the image's reproduction. Implicit within this technicality is the perception of the graphic designer as an efficient and technically proficient professional. Accordingly, the messages within the



Figure 76. RoSPA women's industrial safety and Russian solidarity poster

by F Kenwood Giles

"Cover Your Hair for Safety

Your Russian Sister Does!"

1944

Imperial War Museum

design are perceived as more accurately targeted. It is as if the whole image is predicated on the ideas of progress through technology and the logical and progressive appliance of scientific principles. It is interesting, also, that the Henrion and Morris posters are further connected by the use of the same hand-written script for their message. The use of a script form has a wide range of possible meanings evoking, as it does, the spontaneous, personal and the emotional in addition to simply communicating the information in the text.

The success of the propaganda campaigns of WW2 transformed the status accorded to the visual communications of government. A consequence of this was that the commercial artist was redefined as a technically sophisticated graphic engineer. The programmatic problem-solving processes of Modernism were analogous to those of the command economy established during WW2 and of its post-war welfare interventions.

The acceptance, within even the provincial political class, of the importance of presentation is evidenced by the publication of *"Soldiers of Lead,"* a guide to layout and typography for use in the Labour Party.³⁷⁷ The guide aimed to establish a set of guidelines that would help present a coherent corporate image of the party at local and national level. The cover of this publication is reproduced as figure 74 (p302). The emphasis on letterpress printing, in this particular publication, reflects, I believe, the text-based preferences of the political class in Britain.

³⁷⁷ Written and designed by Michael Middleton and printed at the Pelican Press, May 1948.

It is clear that the RoSPA posters, aimed as they were entirely at the industrial working class, are political artefacts. The political ideals of reform were expressed by Ernest Bevin and pursued through the implementation of new codes of practice in the work place. The graphic expression of these policies is evident, in the RoSPA posters, by reference to a distant figure on the steps of Odessa.

The address, through the RoSPA posters, to different communities and constituencies presented above reveals the wide range and sophistication of their visual references. Two points need to be emphasised.

The first is that the RoSPA designers were able to exploit a range of images and design strategies. These range from a form of social-realism through to the use of Surrealist techniques of transformation. In addition the RoSPA designers appropriated a wide range of images from international sources. The presence of these different strategies and graphic techniques within the one campaign points to the sophistication of both the design environment within RoSPA and within the communities that they addressed. The discovery that ordinary people, beyond London, could be successfully addressed using a richly textured and varied visual language was one of the great discoveries of the war. The lessons and consequences of this discovery were important in shaping the visual communication of the nascent welfare state and of post-war reconstruction.

The second point that needs to be emphasised is that the sophistication of the visual language to which the RoSPA posters contribute is based on the successful integration of elements from different, and hitherto separate, visual languages associated with film, magazine publishing, politics and fine art. The integration of these different traditions of imagery into a coherent visual language that could address themes beyond those normally addressed by commercial art is a characteristic of a “social” vision implicit within the structure of this visual language.

The consequence of these developments was the articulation, within the context of the Festival of Britain, during 1951, of a public space within a social architecture that integrated elements of art, architecture and design into a projection of a new social order. The first steps towards the successful projection of that ideal were taken in 1941. The RoSPA posters are a unique and significant contribution to that project and helped define the visual form and social values of English Modernism.



Figure 77. Female workers relaxing

Reproduced from "*Man Power*"

Brochure Published by the Ministry of Labour and National Service

1944

Paul and Karen Rennie

RoSPA and Modernism in Britain

The RoSPA posters can only support the claim to be a properly and politically engaged form of graphic design if we can place them within the developing matrix of Modernism in Britain. This has traditionally presented historians with a complex problem because Modernism in England seems less coherent, more confused and more complex in its sources and objectives than its continental counterparts.

It is not my intention here to account for the full history of Modernism in England; but rather to attempt to place the RoSPA posters, their production and their visual language within a network of ideas that reveals them to be Modernist and progressive. It is only by so doing that they may be said to conform to Walter Benjamin's criteria for a politically engaged form of cultural production through economy and mass production by mechanical reproduction and to the widespread distribution of such products to maximise their popular impact.

Harrison (1981) suggests that by the end of the 1930s those British artists, such as Paul Nash and John Piper, who had engaged with the ideas and concepts of continental Modernism, "had begun to tire of its intellectualism and to attempt a re-connection with a more emotionally engaged form of landscape art."³⁷⁸ This manifested itself in various forms across a range of cultural products and has been described by the term

³⁷⁸ Harrison (1981) p321.

Neoromanticism.³⁷⁹ The artists associated with this particular movement have claimed to find inspiration in the 19th century paintings of Samuel Palmer.

The term Neoromanticism and its focus on, “images of landscape and pleasing decay in gothic settings,” have cast this form of cultural production in opposition to the prevailing visual language of Modernism that has generally been recognised by its emphasis on metropolitan and machine-age subjects. The British preference for landscape images has tended to confirm the perception of a cultural hostility to Modernism. In fact, it simply expresses the different origins and syntheses that characterise English Modernism.

The development of an avant-garde graphic style, derived and progressing from experiments in Abstraction and Constructivism and also embracing photography and Surrealism, had been welcomed by Alfred Barr, Director of New York’s MoMA, in 1936. He hoped it would begin to replace what he considered, “the over-crowded design and banal realism of most Anglo-American advertising images.” Barr famously expressed his argument in diagram form, describing a Modernist trajectory that connected Moscow, Berlin, Paris and New York, and that excluded Britain.

One of the key points made by Ades (1984) is the relationship between technology and Modernism.³⁸⁰ A feature of 1920s and 30s avant-garde

³⁷⁹ Mellor (1987) has comprehensively detailed this movement in a number of forms including painting, filmmaking and poetry.

design was its embrace of mass-production and mechanical means of reproduction. These were made possible, in printing, by the integration of photographic processes into the make ready. In Soviet Russia the particular difficulties of producing visual messages in a contemporary style using 19th century technology and handicrafts have been the subject of recent analysis by Ellen Lupton (1998) and also by Victoria Bonnell (1997). In fact, completely mechanical reproduction only becomes possible, in the British context of poster production, during WW2. In Russia technological backwardness continued.

Against this backdrop the emergence of Modernism in England remains a problematic. In terms of poster history it is the case that before 1939 the British contribution to design had been altogether too tasteful and landscape-orientated to be recognisably Modernist in the Constructivist or Surrealistic sense. The problem was neither an absence of designers nor of a potential audience. It was rather to do with the lack of capacity within what we might call the “printing-industrial-complex.” The advent of WW2 altered this irrevocably by making available a large amount of extra capacity in both printing output and display. In consequence, the status of poster designer altered from being aligned with the artisan class to being part of a design technocracy. Moreover, by the end of WW2 British poster design had become more sophisticated and had found a voice, beyond the existing rhetoric of Imperial values, to address the industrial worker. This mode of address, of which the RoSPA posters are an example, was to last until at least the late 1950s and provided a

³⁸⁰ Ades (1984) p64.

backdrop of common purpose and collectivity in national life that defined the Social-Democratic project of post-war reconstruction.

Recent work in the history of Modern art, particularly in relation to the painterly response to WW1, has suggested that reactionary ideological values were just as likely to attach themselves to Modernist work. Kenneth Silver (1989) in *“Esprit de Corps,”* examines the avant-garde circle in Paris during and after WW1 and contextualises it within a framework that includes the politics of a so-called, “rappel à l’ordre” (return to order) rather than the more dramatic “clean slate” predicated as the natural and inevitable consequence of war by the first Modernists.³⁸¹ This theme has been looked at in further detail by Romy Golan (1995) in her *“Modernity and Nostalgia”* which attempts to untangle, “the relationship between the progressive potential of technological change and the reactionary, or classical, ordering of society.”³⁸²

Reconciling these disparate and contradictory forces is achieved, she suggests, by an appeal to a mythologised past through nostalgia. The resulting narrative of history is unproblematic and smoothed over. This confirms the view of Roland Barthes that the process of mythologising is precisely that of ironing out complex contradictions and possible inconsistencies. This approach may be helpful in looking at the history of British graphic design and attempting to overcome the legacy of Barr’s judgement that Modernism and Britain are, to some extent, irreconcilable.

³⁸¹ Silver (1989) p23 for a description of the Modernist fantasy of “tabula rasa”.

³⁸² Golan (1995) p189 describes, within the French context, the articulation of post-war social objectives through architecture. In Britain during WW2 the same debate would be articulated through the potential of community.

The RoSPA campaign, with its specifically English context, achieves an accommodation between these conflicting tendencies through the appeal to community. This community is configured, by its Nonconformist antecedents, as utopian rather than nostalgic and through the reordered balance between capital interests and community. The alignment within British Modernism of progressive values and religious tolerance is unusual since Modernism, is usually considered to lead, inevitably, to the secularisation of society. It should be acknowledged that, notwithstanding this trajectory, the relations between religious tolerance and a secular society are inter-woven and complex.³⁸³ The conjunction of a recognition of the significance of visual imagery amongst Nonconformists as part of a political project is unexpected due to the historical suspicion of images amongst Nonconformists.

³⁸³ The crucial distinction in the various forms of Nonconformist response to industrial society is between a religious retreat from modern life or through a positive and ethical engagement with society.

Tradition and Propaganda

The study of British Modernism, as a 20th century phenomenon, is particularly complex in its relations to those aspects of history - especially tradition and nostalgia - which inform the perception of status within British culture. In the specifically British context the legacies of the Arts and Crafts movement and of WW1 are supremely significant. The first informs a social and class based distrust of industry and mass production. The second projects a mystical relation to the landscape and countryside of Britain. Interestingly, this identification of Englishness as a particular characteristic of landscape has never fully expressed itself as a belief in the motherland or a mother country. The contemporary manifestation of these ideas is now described as “psycho-geography.”³⁸⁴ Where contemporary issues of personal identity are concerned, the ideas resurface as “geo-identity.”³⁸⁵

The phenomenology of Modernism in Britain therefore has to take account of, rather than deny, history as a decisive and formative influence. The cultural history of Britain reveals an ambivalent approach to social, economic and material progress, along with the pragmatic appropriation of a wide variety of cultural signifiers that extends to both Modernism and tradition. This is especially evident in the graphic output of the Ministry of Information during WW2 that became adept at

³⁸⁴ See Matless (1998) for the most complete analysis of this new way of reading landscape.

³⁸⁵ See Taylor in Morley and Robins (2001) pp127-144. Anderson (1991) describes the projection of national identity in relation to print-capitalism and the creation of an “imagined community.” The mythologizing of “deep England” described by Calder (1991) is part of the same process.

summoning up the glories of Britain's martial past and, at the same time, holding aloft the tantalising prospect of a meritocratic and more egalitarian post-war society

Paul Greenhalgh has shown how the notion of artisan citizens and of tradition in manufacturing have been appropriated as part of the British compromise in response to Modernism and of how English Modernism has been constructed, by Tallents and Pick amongst others, "as a narrative of liberal continuities balanced by technological and material progress." The post-war consensus, up to the Festival of Britain in 1951, has been described by Barry Curtis as a narrative construct, "able to reconcile both tradition and Modernism and applicable to both state and citizenry."³⁸⁶

The contradictions and compromises implicit in this analysis mark British Modernism out as a special case although not a unique one. John Heskett suggests in "*Design in Inter-War Germany*," that, "a similar problem of rupture has informed the analysis of German Modernism." He has summarised the position as one of two distinct phases, "the first between 1914 and 1933 and the second, starting with the appointment of Hitler as Chancellor, from 1933 to 1946."³⁸⁷

It seems, to Heskett at least, that design is written about in a way that, "has tended to distinguish it from the mainstream of manufactured

³⁸⁶ Curtis (1986) p50.

³⁸⁷ Kaplan (1995) p257.

products, when, actually, it is precisely those popular manufactured products and images that are most revealing in the way that capital, labour and ideology intersect.” Heskett’s point is that design history has to engage with the mass-market. This, suggests Heskett, “involves placing a value of continuity that begins to balance the culturally weighted value of change.” This is precisely the approach that will allow us to locate the RoSPA posters into the trajectory of British Modernism and to connect them, through their engagement with ordinary people, with the best Modernist practice.

The cultural contexts of WW2 locate these poster images within processes of a discourse and a mythologising which are elements of a very British attempt to reconcile Modernism within a humanist tradition of tolerance. These processes have their origins in the period before Modernism and are part of a “long tradition” in British cultural production and identity.³⁸⁸ It is the contexts of WW2 that force a shift in the way that Government communicated with its citizens.

The combination of technological change and evolving communications allows us to account for, as Benjamin suggested, new forms of cultural authorship and to define Modernism in its British contexts around the mythologised ideal of community. It is a community recast as egalitarian and meritocratic and that extends its membership to women and workers and finds its locus in the industrial north.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Orwell (1941) p26 expresses this as “something everlasting.”

³⁸⁹ The “Idea of the North” is increasingly attractive with its emphasis on community. These comforting narratives are routinely played out on Sunday evening television in Britain.

Saler (1999) has described the development of English Modernism during the 1930s by reference to the life of Frank Pick. Pick has already featured in this narrative as the colleague and friend of Ernest Bevin. Pick is also present as the, “structuring intelligence behind the integration of typography, architecture and advertising” first seen within the context of London Transport during the 1930s. The integration of image and policy explicit in the connection between Bevin and the RoSPA posters is evidence of a similar intelligence.

The origins of Frank Pick’s visionary project are in a belief system associated with his childhood. Pick’s family were members of the local Methodist chapel in York. The City was well known for its extensive Quaker community and climate of religious tolerance. Saler tellingly contrasts Pick’s vision for the development of London with his own, rather austere, beliefs expressed in his writings for the Salem Chapel in York. Saler notes the recurrence of certain words, “honesty, discipline, service, and sacrifice; plain and good.”³⁹⁰ These establish Pick as someone who always emphasised that tradition was integral to the further development of society and the arts. Pick may have been personally exceptional in the combination of his own extreme Puritanism and bold Modernism. He was, in other respects though, “a typical English progressive of the inter-war years.” Saler suggests that Pick may have been influenced by the economist Alfred Marshall who argued for, “an economic chivalry that fostered moral and social evolution through the

³⁹⁰ Saler (1999) p35.

actions of altruistic entrepreneurs working within a free market.”³⁹¹ These strategies may be understood as an attempt to accommodate different social and political groups.³⁹²

The combination of altruism and commerce has already surfaced in this story in relation to the concepts of worker welfare promoted by Ernest Bevin through RoSPA and in the Nonconformist origins of RoSPA’s own printers Loxley Brothers of Sheffield, Yorkshire. The coincidences of Pick and Bevin’s shared backgrounds and of RoSPA’s origins in Yorkshire offer an alternative template for English Modernism. This template may accommodate the RoSPA campaign as both welfarist and capitalist.

Morrell’s interest in the antiquities of York prompted him to publish a plan for the preservation and reconstruction of York.³⁹³ The integration of old and new, articulated by Morrell, was further elaborated by Gordon Cullen through the pages of the *“Architectural Review”* and through the concept of “townscape.”³⁹⁴

The compromises implicit in this accommodation between tradition and Modernity mean that the political change required to make this possible

³⁹¹ Quoted in Saler p36.

³⁹² The success of Quaker enterprise contrasts sharply with the contradictions and failure of William Morris’s Arts and Crafts Socialism. The movement was characterised by a retreat from industrial methods to an artisan workshop model of production. The political objectives of the movement might have been better served through an engagement with the emerging mass market. Their philosophical priorities bound them to limited artisan production. These two strands of thinking were contradictory and limited the impact of Morris’s ideas beyond a small group of acolytes.

³⁹³ See Morrell (1940) *“The City of Our Dreams.”* Morrell also established the York Civic Trust, one of the first preservation organisations of its type and was also a founding father of the University of York. Morrell’s book was printed by the Garden City Press, Letchworth.

³⁹⁴ The concept of “townscape” became a staple of post-war town planning throughout Britain.

is not of the same order as that promoted by the radical Left politics of the continental revolutionaries.

Orwell (1941) had recognised that, “revolution does not mean red flags and street fighting, it means a fundamental shift in power” and had attempted to locate the centre of the power for change beyond the normal constraints of party politics.³⁹⁵ Orwell called this, “the native genius of the English people.”³⁹⁶ He identified the conditions under which these characteristic values would be able to flourish as a form of egalitarian and meritocratic community. These values are, surprisingly, similar to those advocated by the “Medieval Modernists” such as Frank Pick.

The idea of community as a defining characteristic of English national identity during the 1940s has been presented as one of the enduring mythologies of WW2. Calder (1991) and Marwick (1968) have recorded how, “a levelling down of class distinctions was reported during the war as people made sacrifices for the greater good.” In fact, as Orwell suggested, “the levelling was up rather than down.” The kinds of tasks required within the services and on the Home-Front required planning and some measure of technical skill and “the tendency in Modern society would be for the spread of middle class ideas and habits amongst the working class.”³⁹⁷ Indeed, Orwell identified the new social structures as

³⁹⁵ Orwell (1941) p75.

³⁹⁶ Orwell (1941) p76.

³⁹⁷ Orwell (1941) p51.

necessarily emancipatory through their tendency, “to enlarge the middle class.”³⁹⁸

Colls (2002), in his analysis of English national identity, examines the concept of community and identifies the 1940s with the integration of two substantial, yet marginalised, groups – the workers and women.³⁹⁹ Both these groups were addressed by the RoSPA posters. Colls suggests that the usual class antagonisms that characterise revolutionary politics are absent in Britain and that, “Labour’s long march to progress was seen as roughly in the same direction as the richer class, but slower, and lower, and on the other side of the tracks.”⁴⁰⁰

The war speeded up this long march. So much so that Ernest Bevin was able to comment to Clement Attlee that, “victory should have removed any inferiority complex amongst our people.”⁴⁰¹ Colls concludes that, “the 1945 Labour Government managed to combine public ownership with provision with an unquestioning attitude to the constitution.”⁴⁰²

The problematic of English Modernism can be summarised so that in, both its stylistic and social manifestations, greater store has been placed, in England, on integrationist narratives of continuity rather than the dramatic ruptures favoured by the more extreme political motivations. The RoSPA posters exemplify this tendency towards community within the context of a distinctively English tradition of Nonconformist religious

³⁹⁸ Orwell (1941) p51.

³⁹⁹ Colls (2002) p109.

⁴⁰⁰ Colls (2002) p111.

⁴⁰¹ Bullock (1960) p381.

⁴⁰² Colls (2002) p130.

belief as well as well as a belief in the emancipatory potential of the existing liberal constitution.

The attempt to locate the locus of the emancipatory potential of Modernism in provincial communities should not be mistaken as necessarily reactionary. Alan Powers, writing about the avant-garde magazine “*Axis*” has suggested that, “the Modernist rediscovery of landscape and the expression, through Neoromanticism, of traditional values can be understood as expressing an emotional attachment that is in no way necessarily nostalgic or reactionary.”⁴⁰³ Powers suggests that, “by the end of the 1930s, Modern artists in Britain had succeeded in creating a space within the rhetoric of Modern art into which both the particular and the universal could be balanced.”⁴⁰⁴

For the artists of “*Axis*,” notably John Piper and Graham Sutherland, the possibility was afforded by the present day rediscovery of ancient landscapes. For the designers associated with RoSPA similar possibilities were available by addressing their worker constituencies through an ideal of community and by the use of Modernist techniques in graphic production and communication.

English Modernism was uniquely configured during WW2 to project the progressive social values that would be established as a consequence of

⁴⁰³ “*Axis*” was an arts magazine edited by Myfanwy Evans, later Piper, and published and distributed through the Zwemmer Gallery in London. The magazine began as enthusiastic supporters of continental Modernism’s Abstract and Constructive movements. It later became more circumspect in its support. The magazine ran to eight issues between 1935 and 1937. See Powers (2002) p269.

⁴⁰⁴ Powers (2002) p273.

war. The English Modernist project was powerfully expressed through the cultural production of the time and in a wide variety of forms. The RoSPA posters are part of this expression and are unique in their voluntary, non-official and non-commercial origin.

The cultural production associated with the successful projection of progressive social values in Britain during WW2 may be official as from the Ministry of Information, or commercial as in "*Picture Post*." Uniquely, it could also be independent and voluntary.⁴⁰⁵ The balance of these projections may be taken to characterise a specifically English configuration of the Social-Democratic project in Britain.

At a local level RoSPA had been active, since the mid 1930s, in establishing the reporting of accidents as a force in promoting public awareness of safety issues. Health and safety were constantly reported in the local newspapers. By sheer number road accidents were the most widely reported. Industrial accidents seem to have been reported only where they were serious enough to make them newsworthy to a wider audience. Household accidents were also widely reported, but with an emphasis on fatalities.⁴⁰⁶

It is interesting, when confronted by the sheer quantity of this ephemeral production and news reporting, to reflect on the emerging force of the

⁴⁰⁵ The impact of the voluntary sector on the successful projection of the Social-Democratic project should also be noted and not be underestimated. The Women's Voluntary Services (WVS) was founded in 1938. Its members played a vital role during the war and helped foster a social climate in which new political ideas could be expressed. Beauman (1977) tells the story of the WVS.

⁴⁰⁶ Almost any selection of local newspapers from the period 1937–1946 can be used to illustrate this point. I am grateful to Dr Janice Hart for making this "background" to the RoSPA campaign clearer.

mass media in the social construction of new notions of citizenship within the context of Modernist transformation.⁴⁰⁷ As Hall (1971) has pointed out, “the war unleashed forces that were beyond the control and comprehension of the political establishment.”⁴⁰⁸ It should be recognized that the discourse of citizenship within which these publications were located helped to minimise middle-class and establishment anxieties about the forces of change. The prevailing tone of this discourse was of, “responsibility, fairness and security.”

The trajectory of this Modernism contrasts with its contemporary variants configured by unique appeal to either ideological or commercial values.

⁴⁰⁷ See, for example, Spender (1945) or MOI (1944) as exemplars of this ephemeral print production.

⁴⁰⁸ Hall (1971) p143. A P Young identified the management of RoSPA in an internal report, as precisely the kind to be left behind by the changing world.

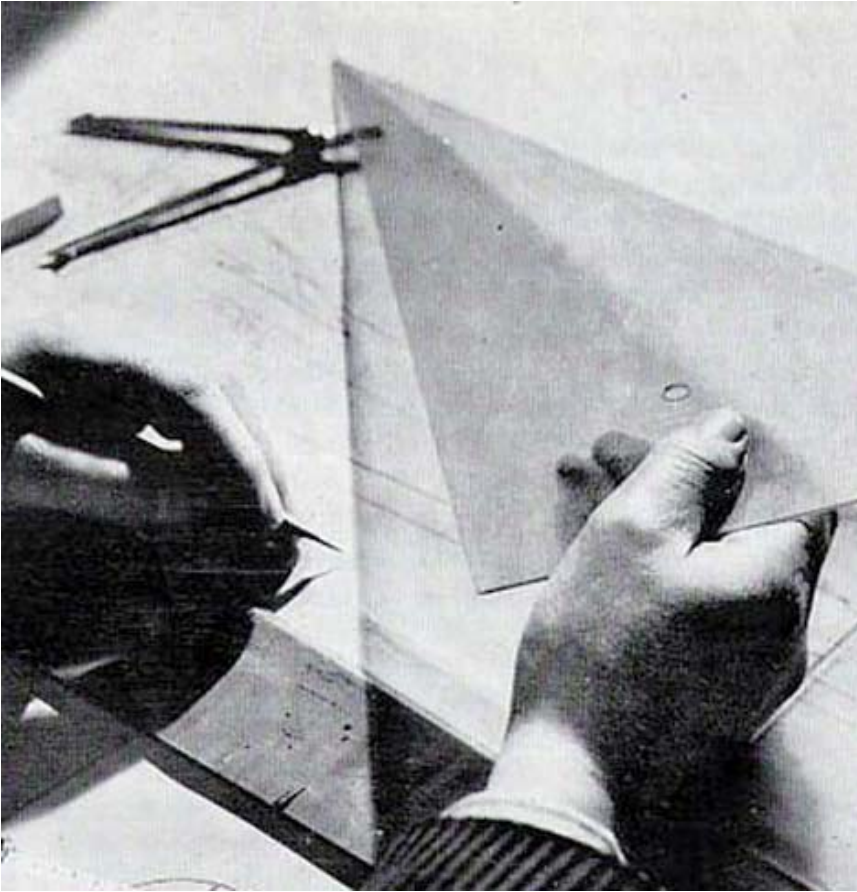


Figure 78. Work of the future
Reproduced from "*Man Power*"
Brochure Published by the Ministry of Labour and National Service
1944
Paul and Karen Rennie

Graphic Authorship in Post-War Britain

The successful embrace of mechanical reproduction in poster printing evident through the RoSPA campaign changed the design environment for posters and graphic design in Britain irrevocably. In consequence the concept of graphic authorship changed. This section of the thesis examines this change within the contexts of WW2 and the RoSPA campaign and also in relation to subsequent technological developments in printing.

We have already examined the limits placed on the potential for poster design before WW2 through an adherence to an antiquated craft tradition. The craft traditions effectively limited opportunities for poster design by their extravagant claims on time and resources in the make-ready processes prior to printing. These determinants also had the effect of barring entry into this prestigious form of printing to all but the largest regional printers. Furthermore, a certain cultural suspicion towards advertising images had manifest itself in a concern, expressed by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) and the DIA, to limit the spread of advertising display sites, especially in rural areas.

The demands of WW2 propaganda on the printing industry, in terms of speedy make-ready, printing and quantity of output, transformed the

environment in which designers worked. The constructive potential of photo-mechanical processes of reproduction had been acknowledged from the early 1920s by designers in the Soviet Union and in Germany. This had, throughout the later 1920s and 1930s, produced a wide variety of graphic ephemera that met the criteria laid down by Benjamin for a properly engaged and politically progressive form of cultural production. The technical limits of the photo-mechanical reproduction had held back this progress to the creation of books, magazines and other small-scale works. The larger scale work for exhibitions was painted as murals whilst the poster designs were created using photographic elements and re-touching and over painting. The poster, with its defining characteristic of scale, remained beyond the scope of the graphic strategies of assembly, repetition and montage so that its potential as a “telegraphic bulletin,” a term coined by Maiakovski, remained unrealised until the advent of WW2.

The RoSPA posters are compelling evidence of this technological transition and of the emergence in Britain of a new paradigm of authority and influence expressed, in part at least, through a radical re-alignment of class interests. The circumstances of the RoSPA campaign and its relative position on the margins of propaganda production during WW2 was reflected in the composition of its designer cadre. Games, Eckersley, Schleger, Reiss and Rothholz might all claim “outsider” status within the context of the British establishment; Schleger, Reiss and Rothholz because they were émigrés, Eckersley, because he was from the north and Games because he was from London’s east-end and of Jewish

descent. The composition of this designer cadre might be claimed to mirror the social and political re-alignments of the post-war period.

The successful conditions for the realisation of Benjamin's criteria for a politically progressive form of cultural production were met, as we have seen, during WW2. The particular circumstances of post-war Britain offered up the possibility of continuing productive and constructive dialogue between designer, printer and community. Graphic authorship in Britain became part of a technocratic, if not managerial, process allied to the welfarist objectives of the Labour administration. These new relations were expressed through the creation of new networks that ran parallel to those of the established and commercial advertising industry. In Britain the propaganda efforts of WW2 were extended, post-war, through the creation of the Central Office of Information who were responsible for the propaganda communications and information of the nascent welfare state in Britain.

Writing in 1946 Herbert Read suggested that, "the practice of design would, in its British context, extend toward both the technical and the emotional."⁴⁰⁹ The grounding of technical practice within a greater social reality was described by Read as, "a concord between the values of machine aesthetics and those of monopolist or collectivist economics."⁴¹⁰ Read was optimistic that in Britain, whatever the turn of political events, design and society would continue to interact ways that were both "progressive and benign."

⁴⁰⁹ Read (1946) p21. The American context identified the post-war graphic designer as "a conceptual problem solver" Meggs (1998) p39 quoted in Remington (2003) p97.

⁴¹⁰ Read (1946) p21.

Eric Newton had commented on the potential of poster design to effect important social change as early as 1943.⁴¹¹ This had been recognised in time of war and Newton had stated that, “design skills are a key factor in achieving maximum effect.”⁴¹² The status of designer in the post-war years reflected the new significance accorded the practice of design. This was further enhanced by the creation of a specialist design education framework in Britain after WW2.

Lupton (1998) has described the American post-war context of design as, “being about supplying the existing apparatus of publishing and promotion.”⁴¹³ She comments that this reduced the opportunities for a critical intervention of the sort promoted by Benjamin. This is especially true of America where, as we have seen through the Mather posters, the emancipation of workers was attached, for political purposes, to their productive power. In Europe, the experiences of WW2 helped to create a space for government communications that had not existed during the 1930s. The pan-European dimension to this network of design was reflected in the publishing of reflexive magazines such as “*Graphis*,” in Switzerland from 1943, and “*Gebrauchsgraphik*” in Germany. In Britain the magazine “*Typographica*,” established and edited in 1949 by Herbert Spencer, was published by Lund Humphries to provide a critical and experimental forum for the emerging taxonomy of signs and symbols that were the building blocks of post-war graphic authorship and its visual language. The international collaboration in this project is evident also in the post-war formation of the Alliance Graphique (AGI) that provided a

⁴¹¹ Newton reviewing the “*Poster in Wartime*” exhibition in “*Design and Industry*,” July 1943.

⁴¹² Newton quoted in Games (2003) p48.

⁴¹³ Lupton (1998) p81.

forum for the exchange of views between the members of the emerging design establishment. Tom Eckersley was a member of this association during the early 1950s.

The development after WW2 of four colour processes in graphic reproduction began a period during which offset lithography, pioneered by the RoSPA printers Loxley Brothers, would come to dominate the British printing industry. The geographical spread of this technology assured much greater, and easier, access to the networks of local production that have characterised the printing industry's development in Britain. Authorship became, in consequence, a local possibility that attached the designer and printer to their communities. This was always a characteristic of the letterpress and jobbing printer and has been comprehensively described by Twyman (1966) in his analysis of an earlier and localised printing economy in Ulverston, Cumbria.⁴¹⁴

The RoSPA campaign was part of a dramatic re-organisation of the graphic industries that occurred as a consequence of servicing the propaganda demands of WW2. The activity of design became associated, in the public mind and in the perception of Government and industry, with the manipulation of images as part of a dynamic and sophisticated visual language that could express a variety of ideas extending beyond the purely commercial rhetoric of "commercial art." The emergence of this new "technical" activity was marked by a transition in the perception of the design activity as a shift, "from artisan skill to one of

⁴¹⁴ Twyman (1966) p6.

classification, manipulation and ordering.” These skills allowed design authorship to be repositioned as a technical and quasi-scientific activity. In England, this transition also allowed the emerging discipline to be recast as a professional, and middle-class, activity.

Aynsley (2000) has described changes in graphic design activity in Germany from 1900 through 1940 and identified three possible models of design activity.⁴¹⁵ The emergence in Britain of a design activity that allowed for the expression of ideas that were not entirely commercial, nor entirely ideological, is remarkable and unique. The significant roles of Ashley Havinden and Tom Eckersley in continuing the development of this visual language should not be underestimated. After WW2 Havinden re-established himself as a creative director within the commercial advertising firm of Crawford’s.⁴¹⁶ Eckersley’s relationship with Havinden continued through the commission of designs from Eckersley for Crawford’s. Eckersley later joined the teaching staff of the London College of Printing where he made a decisive contribution to graphic design education in Britain.

The success of British design during the 1960s and the emergence of London as a young, populist and “swinging” metropolis was linked to the emergence, during the early 1960 of new forms of mechanical reproduction and communication through the mass media. The potential

⁴¹⁵ Aynsley (2000) pp59-85 identifies these variants of graphic design as factory based, all-round and specialised. In Germany the evolution of design activity continued towards a goal of efficient and economic standardization. This evolution is exemplified in the “scientism of Bauhaus methodology in design” and the later alignment, manifest in the USA, between Modernism and consumerism.

⁴¹⁶ National Galleries of Scotland (2003) pp50-51.

of these new technologies was quickly realised because of the foundations laid by these pioneers of Modernism in Britain. Of course, the circumstances and focus of the evolving visual language of the 1960s was very different from that of WW2 and aimed entirely at a developing consumerism of “youth culture.”⁴¹⁷

The successful expression of these wide-ranging ideas required a visual language that drew from a similarly wide range of sources. The experience of WW2 was probably the first in which designers and public began to discern an integrated visual language that exploited images taken from cinema, magazine publishing, graphic design, propaganda and newspapers. The classification of these elements into a useable “common currency” of visual expression was greatly helped by the beginnings of a specialised design education and of a supporting bibliography of journals and books.

The link between graphic authorship and the English variant of Modernism is manifest through the massive publishing programme in support of war aims and post-war reconstruction. The elements of this programme take many forms including posters, official and unofficial publications, magazines and newspaper articles.

⁴¹⁷ Hall (1972) contrasts the social values of *“Picture Post”* with those of the new consumerist and illustrated Sunday magazines that were launched in Britain during the 1960s.



Figure 79. Post-War Government communication by Tom Eckersley

"Keep Britain Tidy"

1958

Paul and Karen Rennie

Together these constitute what may, with hindsight, be recognised as the beginnings of a discourse of citizenship that addresses a wide variety of themes extending from patriotism through to neighbourliness and a consideration of others.

These values were exemplified in the activities of, for example, the Civil Defence Forces. Chief amongst their concerns was for the welfare and safety of ordinary people in the extraordinarily dangerous circumstances of war and bombardment. This concern was expressed through an extensive and ongoing dialogue about safety issues and accidents that was managed through the pages of local newspapers.

By the late 1950s this discourse had been extended to the campaign against litter. Tom Eckersley's poster for that campaign is illustrated as figure 79 (p340).

The recent proliferation of digital media and printing technologies has, as Lupton (1998) suggests, "offered up new and intriguing possibilities for designers and authors to become producers."⁴¹⁸ The new technologies offer the potential to extend these local networks and communities.

⁴¹⁸ Lupton (1998) p81.

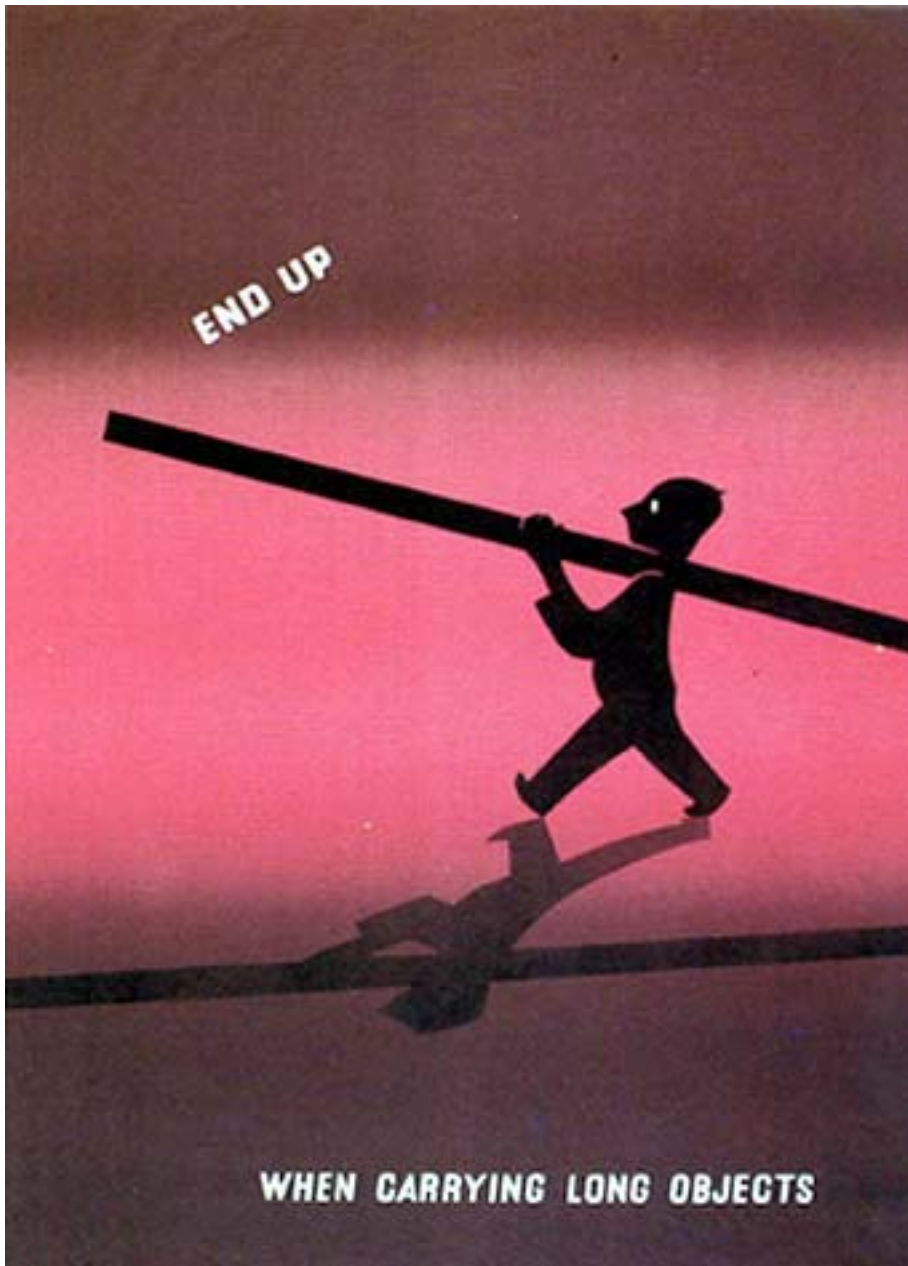


Figure 80. RoSPA poster by Leonard Cusden

"End Up

When Carrying

Long Objects"

1950

Zürich Museum of Design Poster Collection

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to explain how the RoSPA campaign developed and how, within the context of WW2, the campaign was able to exploit advances in printing technology to serve a series of ideological objectives that went beyond the immediate remit of the poster campaign. The posters are mass produced and circulated to a wide audience and address their theme of accident prevention using a graphically sophisticated visual language and informed by a set of progressive social values derived, in part at least, from the humane social agenda of Nonconformist communitarianism and “human factor management” promoted by Ernest Bevin.

The successful association, implicit in the RoSPA campaign, of accident prevention, good management and sound economics is described in detail by Madge (1943) who presents the challenges of a modern economy in relation to the different interests of management, workers and administration. He concludes that success is through collaboration between board, conference and committee. Madge’s text was published as the first in a series entitled “*Target for Tomorrow*” published by the Pilot Press. Madge asked the question “*Industry after the War – Who is Going to Run it?*” And presented his argument as text supported by photographs and statistical diagrams. Interestingly, the photographs include portraits of scientific and technical workers alongside those of shipbuilder and miner. Thus power and reason are joined in the service of this social and political project.

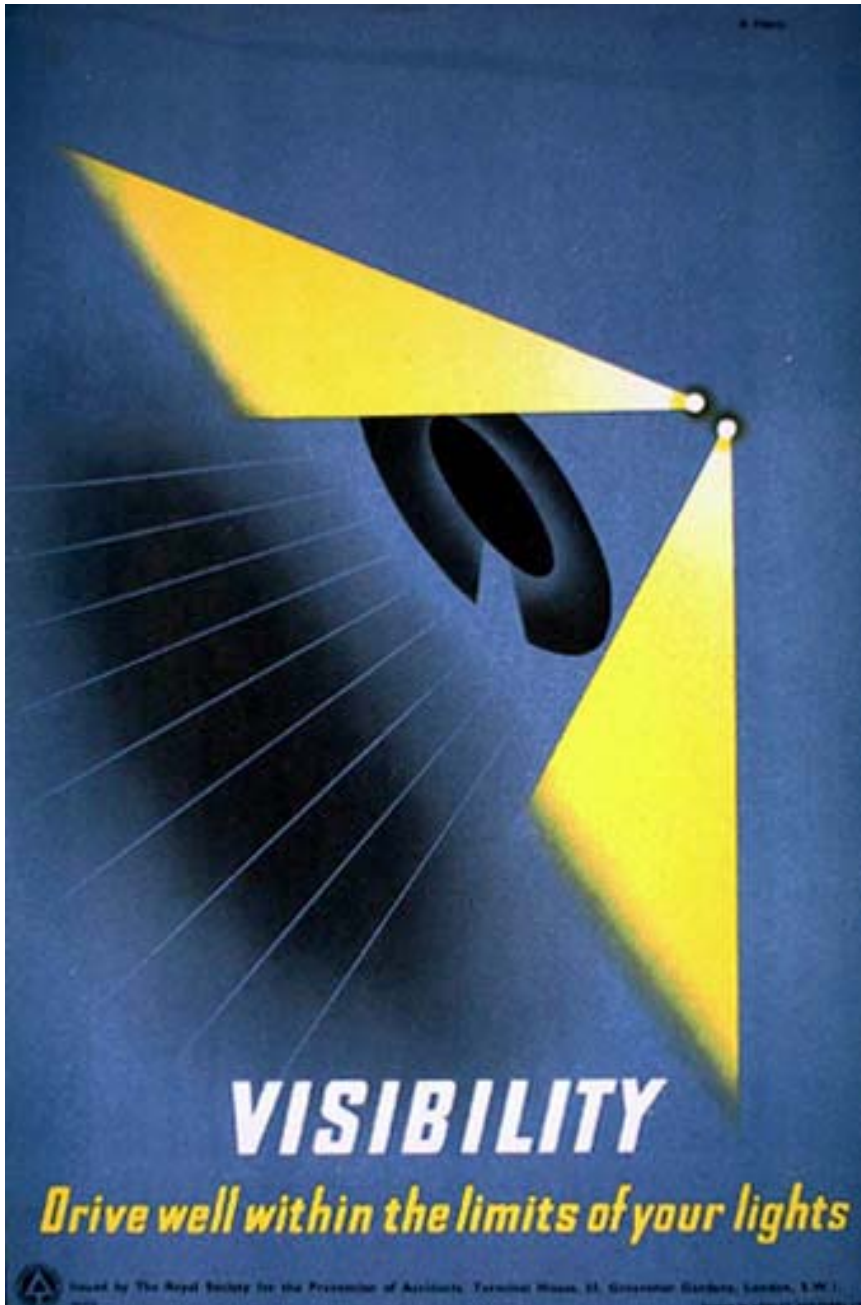


Figure 81. RoSPA road safety poster by Abram Games

"Visibility"

1946

Abram Games Studio Archive

The bona fides of the RoSPA campaign are attested by reference to the personalities behind the project. Chief amongst them are the designers, Tom Eckersley and his émigré colleagues. They were supported by the guiding intelligence within RoSPA of both Ashley Havinden and Francis Meynell. The presence of both Havinden and Meynell allowed the RoSPA campaign to exploit the Modernist and avant-garde networks that had established themselves in London. The connection, via Havinden, to the offices of the printing firm of Percy Lund Humphries is, I believe, especially important. This office can be identified as, “a locus of Modernist London.”⁴¹⁹

At the end of WW2 the Industrial Service was RoSPA’s largest section. The war had seen a dramatic increase in the industrial membership relative to that of the Road Safety and Home Safety sections. A P Young’s internal report into the organisational structure of RoSPA had predicted that a reversion to pre-war organisational priorities would undermine the effectiveness of the RoSPA organisation.⁴²⁰

The withdrawal of Bevin’s underwriting of the Industrial Service was a natural consequence of the end of hostilities. The end of this support provided a pretext for RoSPA to revert to its pre-war priorities placing renewed significance on the activities of the Road Safety section. This redirection of resources was reflected in the poster output of the

⁴¹⁹ The role of the Lund Humphries office has been explained in relation to the careers of McKnight Kauffer by Haworth Booth (1979), to Hans Schleger by Schleger (2001) and to Herbert Spencer by Poynor (2001). There is clearly an opportunity for a general history of this firm and of its role in the development of Modernism in Britain.

⁴²⁰ Young’s report, referred to earlier, suggested that the pre-war priorities and personnel of RoSPA would be unsuitable for the post-war meritocracy. Young identified the continued use of military titles as, “particularly archaic” and recognised hostility, within the incumbent RoSPA administration, to the increased importance of the Industrial Service.

organisation. The Industrial Service continued to produce accident prevention posters but the campaign lost some of the graphic coherence that had been characteristic of its output during WW2. By about 1950 it is true to say that the posters produced for Road Safety Service were graphically more sophisticated than their industrial counterparts. It should be noted that Abram Games, Hans Schleger and Tom Eckersley were all able to contribute to the Road Safety campaigns after WW2. Two post-war RoSPA posters are reproduced as figures 80 and 81 (pages 342 and 344).

Without the political and material resources provided by Ernest Bevin the RoSPA campaign could not have taken the form that it did. Bird and Rubenstein (1998) have described how, in America, the industrial propaganda of war production and output contributed to a perception that, “the successful productive effort was due to industrial management techniques rather than the productive power of organised labour.”⁴²¹ The war effort helped rehabilitate American corporatism and “laid the groundwork for the sale of political and economic ideas.”⁴²² In Britain the corporatist revival was held in check, at least for a time, by the acknowledgment of the worker contribution to victory and by the configuration of new socio-political communities.⁴²³

The RoSPA posters conform exactly to Benjamin’s criteria and are rare evidence of Modernist cultural production flourishing in the unlikely

⁴²¹ Bird and Rubenstein (1998) p88.

⁴²² Bird and Rubenstein (1998) p88 quoting R H Rovere’s (1944) “*Advertising in Wartime.*” See also Remington (2003) p97.

⁴²³ The American project, subsumed into an ideology of “Manifest Destiny” continues to inform contemporary corporate capitalism.

circumstances of war. The RoSPA posters disabuse, by their very existence, two powerful orthodoxies; that Modernism was rejected in Britain and that WW2 marked a retreat from Modernist experimentation in design. Furthermore, the posters offer tangible evidence of the social change identified by George Orwell as, “a necessary condition for victory in war.”

The RoSPA posters contribute to and help account for a process of social change that was both irrevocable and, in consequence, revolutionary. The absence of the usual signifiers of revolutionary class conflicts, red flags and barricades for example, should not obscure the significance of these changes. It is important to recognise that the RoSPA posters were produced, they were displayed and, at the end of the war, a reforming Labour government was elected. These things were not, as we have established, coincidental. Tellingly, the RoSPA posters remained the only ones of their type, anywhere in the world, until the mid 1950s.⁴²⁴

The RoSPA posters of WW2 deserve to be recognised alongside “*Picture Post*” as an exemplar of the expression of the popular Social-Democratic project that is a characteristic of English Modernism. Hall (1972) identified the emergence of “*Picture Post*” as, in part at least, “due to the abnormal circumstances of war that temporarily sanctioned the conjuncture of politics, social values and aesthetics that distinguished it’s

⁴²⁴ “*Polish Accident Prevention Posters*,” in “*Gebrauchsgraphik*,” October 1956. The themes of Polish and Russian accident prevention are underscored by a concern for alcohol abuse amongst the workforce and in the workplace. See also Lelieur (2004) p388 and Szemberg (1955) p40. In the 1960s a set of industrial safety stamps were issued in Germany.

editorial position.”⁴²⁵ The RoSPA posters are a similar consequence of these, “abnormal circumstances and historical conjunctures.” They are significant in that the cultural impact of these individual examples would usually be dismissed as an exception to the prevailing orthodoxy of war propaganda as militaristic, masculine and nationalist. The RoSPA posters offer, along with “*Picture Post*,” tangible evidence of a widespread and popular appreciation of Modern design in the service of community. The identification of the RoSPA posters as part of this project is overdue and reveals it to be expressed through an integrated visual language of photojournalism, films, graphic design and illustrated humour.⁴²⁶

The analysis of RoSPA posters has shown that the integrated visual language, of which they are part, was constructed from a richly diverse range of sources. The contribution, itemised earlier, of Surrealism and of International Left iconography to the RoSPA project reveal a sophisticated and expansive inventory of ideas that supports the RoSPA project. The willingness to mobilise these ideas in time of war and to use them to promote a progressive recasting of Modernity and community reveals the scope of ambition behind the RoSPA campaign.

⁴²⁵ Hall (1972) p88.

⁴²⁶ The successful projection of a “social vision” through cultural production and the media is all the more remarkable when set against the near impossibility of such a project in our contemporary society. Noam Chomsky has established a “propaganda model” that describes the media as, “managing an alignment between the vested interests of the political and business elites.” This is in contrast to the prevailing view, widely expressed in the media itself, of the media as a “Jeffersonian 4th Estate” which acts as a check on power. Chomsky argues that the trend for media interests to be concentrated, in a few globally scaled and corporate organisations, has diminished the possibilities for alternatives to the prevailing view to find a platform for expression. The articulation any alternative view would be seen, within the media organisation itself, as “dysfunctional and illogical.”

The progressive marginalisation, after say 1955, of the “social vision” to which the RoSPA posters contribute may therefore be explained by the steady encroachment of capital upon the supporting organisations of that project.

Chomsky’s “propaganda model” is described in Mitchell and Schoffel (2003) pp15-30.

The embrace of mechanical reproduction in the successful expression of this “social vision” transformed graphic authorship from a branch of artisan craft into a technocratic process of image selection, manipulation and technical precision.⁴²⁷

We should acknowledge that RoSPA would have produced industrial safety propaganda without the precipitating circumstances of war. We should, however, note that the volume of their production and their choice of designers might have been very different. RoSPA’s policy of organic growth supported by membership subscriptions would not have been sufficient to support and produce the equivalent volume of material. Without the critical mass, afforded by Bevin, the posters would have been less effective for being less widely seen. In consequence the progressive values promoted by Bevin and RoSPA would have needed longer to become accepted as a “natural” consequence of capitalist development.

It is fair to say that, without the context of war, the radical potential of RoSPA’s campaign would have remained unrealised until much later. Marwick (1968) estimates that the number of women employed in light industrial, engineering and vehicle manufacturing (precisely the kinds of environments in which RoSPA posters were displayed) rose by 770,000 during WW2.⁴²⁸ Each of those women came into contact with RoSPA’s industrial propaganda and, in turn, had an influence on family and

⁴²⁷ See Carrick (1943) for examples of this transformation in relation to documentary films and ordinary people. The photographic portraits of John Hinde may also be counted amongst this projection of ordinary people.

⁴²⁸ Marwick (1968) p290.

friends. The successful consciousness raising potential of active war work was a universal feature of the experience. So-much-so that an American observer remarked that, “Hitler is doing what centuries of British history have not accomplished – he is breaking down the class structure of Britain.”⁴²⁹

Ernest Bevin’s friendship with Frank Pick (who died in 1941) established a continuity between RoSPA and with the design reform of the DIA and of Pick’s work at London Transport. The Nonconformist backgrounds of Pick and Bevin gave the RoSPA project an ethical and social dimension that distinguished it from a merely political initiative. Orwell remarked that, “the gentleness of English civilization is perhaps its most marked characteristic.”⁴³⁰ It would have surprised both Benjamin and Gramsci that the social re-alignments of English Modernism were achieved without the need for violent internal struggle. The war acted as a kind of device of revolutionary displacement so that irrevocable and progressive social change had become, as Orwell had noted, “a necessary (although insufficient) condition for victory in war” and part of a larger project (defined by Orwell himself) “to identify the ‘real’ England.”⁴³¹

The RoSPA posters play a part in establishing this new identity. It is rooted in regional communities beyond the political establishment and the metropolis. The RoSPA project is evidence of what Orwell has called the connectedness of English culture. The continuities of English

⁴²⁹ Reported in the “*New York Herald Tribune*,” 21st September, 1940. Quoted in Marwick (1968) p297.

⁴³⁰ Orwell (1941) p17.

⁴³¹ Orwell (1941) p126.

Modernism configure both community and continuity by appeal to a variety of Modernist and traditional elements.⁴³² The accommodations between these elements are resolved through synthesis rather than compromise.

The RoSPA posters are representative of a healing accommodation between different class interests in Britain. The new accommodation is presented as healthy, energetic and hygienic.⁴³³ Antonio Gramsci had used a similar language in relation to the liberating potential of the “rationalised,” or “Taylorised workplace” and to describe his belief in the emancipatory alignment of man, machine and family.⁴³⁴ The more bucolic alignments of community and workshop were similarly identified in the English Arts and Crafts movement’s ideal of the garden city suburb. The relationships between Nonconformism, industrial production and design uncovered through the RoSPA posters seems a fruitful avenue for further research.⁴³⁵

The shared vocabulary of these ideas is given a powerful, and literal, expression through the concern for worker welfare, accident prevention

⁴³² An unexpected consequence of the methodology pioneered by Calder (1991), which has examined the “Mythology” of WW2, has been the suggestion that the communities addressed through Home-Front propaganda were “imagined” for the ideological support of victory. Accordingly, the support for the progressive post-war agenda is diminished if the communities that it addressed were “imagined.” The RoSPA posters are therefore of consequence in the evidence they offer of a “real” industrial community.

⁴³³ Moholy Nagy quoted in Aynsley (2000) p101. It is interesting to note that Moholy-Nagy had used the latter term in relation to his ideas about the development of a coherent symbolic language of typo-photographic elements.

⁴³⁴ Gramsci quoted in Wollen (1993) p51.

⁴³⁵ Several avenues of research have been opened up by this thesis. The first is obviously to continue examining the career of Tom Eckersley and to look at his contribution, through teaching at the London College of Printing, to the design environment of the 1960s and 70s. The second is to look at the post-war RoSPA campaigns and to examine the decline in quality of the visual expression of “social vision.” The coincidence and interactions of Quakerism, the North and Modernism in Britain offer a rich and compelling series of possibilities for the interaction of design, politics and philosophy.

and the RoSPA posters. In the factory the first aid post became a symbol of a new alignment between labour and capital for national survival. After the war the new architecture of the nascent National Health Service became an important talisman for the idealism of reconstruction.

Noel Carrington commenting, in 1946, on the qualities of British war propaganda identified, “a willingness to use Modern and experimental treatments in the most successful efforts.” There was a willingness, continued Carrington, “to believe the public capable of appreciation that was, generally, justified.”⁴³⁶ The embrace of graphic Modernism, explicit in the RoSPA campaign and its success, is evidence of that willingness and appreciation. Furthermore, the deep cultural roots of the project reveal that English Modernism was a more robust and substantial achievement than generally thought. The narratives of progressive social change represented in the RoSPA posters offer a powerful and positive alternative to the prevailing trajectories of national decline since 1945.

The design environment after WW2 was very different from that prior to the war. The war had speeded up the introduction of new technology and mechanical reproduction through offset lithography had replaced the craft traditions of hand drawn stone lithography. The increased propaganda requirements of WW2 had forced the pace of change on an industry that had, for its own reasons, clung to its antiquated procedures. The demand for graphic communication was sustained, after the war, by the creation of the welfare state. The advocacy of the state and its role as design

⁴³⁶ Carrington (1946) in “*Graphis*,” Number 14, p176.

client reached its apotheosis (in terms of the post-war project) in the Festival of Britain of 1951. The inclusion of graphic designers amongst the technical elite of scientists, engineers, architects and artists associated with the Festival confirmed the change of status accorded to graphic design and its products.

The catalogue of RoSPA's WW2 posters attached to this thesis gives an indication of the wide variety of designers used by the campaign and of the consistently high standard of design produced by them. The posters are compelling evidence of high ideals during a period of national emergency and dramatic social change. Those ideals include a belief in the potential of design to help create a better world. The RoSPA posters are testimony to these heroic efforts.

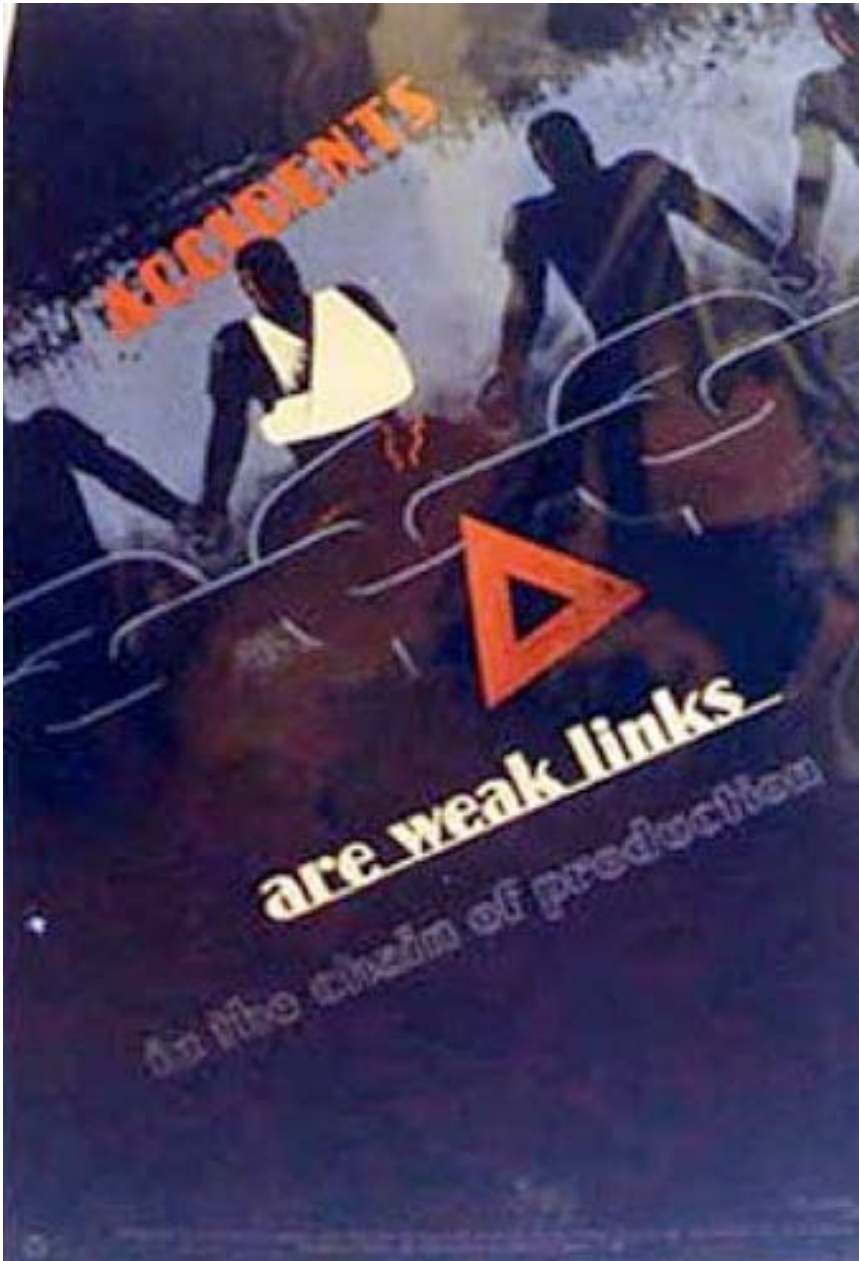


Figure 81. RoSPA poster by Leonard Cusden

"Accidents Are Weak Links

In the Chain of Production"

1943

Imperial War Museum

Appendix

The Catalogue

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Sources

I am grateful to the following institutions and private collections for granting me access to their poster collections in the preparation of this catalogue

Imperial War Museum, London

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

Eckersley Archive, London College of Communication, London

Museum für Gestaltung, Zürich

Hoover Institution Archive, Stanford, California, USA

Abram Games Studio, London

H Arnold Rothholz Studio, London

Michael Nathan Collection, London

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection, London

Andrew Ross Collection, London

Lynn Trickett Collection, London

Swann Galleries, New York City, USA

Notes for the Catalogue

This catalogue of RoSPA WW2 posters began as an attempt to collect and organise the posters produced by RoSPA during and immediately after WW2. It soon became clear that it would not be possible to compile a catalogue raisonné from the available information. The RoSPA archives do not include any list of poster output for any period in their history; much less the difficult and chaotic years of WW2.

In the absence of such a list, against which to check images, the catalogue became a more modest undertaking. The first task was to find collections of material that included RoSPA posters from WW2 and to begin organising that material. It quickly became obvious that hardly any material has survived in any systematic or coherent way. The Eckersley archive at the London College of Communication was the starting point for the catalogue by providing the material that Eckersley himself had retained from the period. This, perhaps because of the circumstances of war, is not a complete set of his poster output for RoSPA.

The families of designers were generous in their help, notably those of Abram Games and H Arnold Rothholz who gave me access to their studio archives. The Games and Rothholz archives are more complete, as records of their individual careers, though less substantial in quantity, than the Eckersley archive. In terms of the RoSPA poster campaign neither of these designers was able to work as consistently as Eckersley during the war. This was because Games was otherwise engaged at the

War Office and Rothholz was deported to Canada as an enemy alien. The studio collection of F H K Henrion also provided examples of the RoSPA campaign that he had saved. However there is no record of Henrion ever working for RoSPA. The posters that he saved appear to be part of an informal exchange of work between professional colleagues and contemporaries.

The most comprehensive archive of RoSPA material is held at the Imperial War Museum in London. This collection was formed, at the end of the war, by the distribution of material from various war ministries to be kept in national institutions. The RoSPA material, saved from the Ministry of Labour, was retained by the museum and is part of one of the most extensive collections of war propaganda in the world. In terms of the RoSPA poster campaign, it is interesting to note that they have only representative examples of the slogan posters and of the cartoon posters by the cartoonist Mendoza.⁴³⁷ The other main institutional collections of RoSPA material, notably those at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London and at the Museum für Gestaltung, Zürich, Switzerland, were put together after WW2. In consequence these collections reflect the changing priorities of RoSPA poster production during the immediate post-war period. The road safety posters are relatively over-represented in these collections in comparison to the industrial propaganda of RoSPA. This is a reflection, I believe, of the prioritisation of road safety within the RoSPA organisation after 1945.

⁴³⁷ Peter Mendoza is also listed as a contributor to an advertising campaign "*Aspects of Industry*" that promoted Imperial Chemical Industries.

The Design Museum in Zürich has a mixed selection of RoSPA posters that were originally part of a teaching collection. There are no records in the Museum of how those posters came to be housed there.

Within the limits of the resources described above it is clear that one of the major problems for poster historians is the arbitrary nature of what survives. One of the surprising lessons of this research into the RoSPA WW2 posters has been how fragile and ephemeral this material is. That is not to say that it does not survive but that it is spread thinly and the institutional record of graphic production remains fitfully incomplete in contrast to, say, the record of newspaper, magazine or book production. These categories of graphic production have been systematically saved by the library system in Great Britain. This may help to explain why the study of poster images remains under-represented within the disciplines of design and cultural history.

In these circumstances this catalogue should not be seen as a definitive catalogue of RoSPA WW2 posters. Instead, it is as complete as the extensive research materials consulted has been able to provide in relation to RoSPA's WW2 industrial safety poster production.

The posters are listed alphabetically by designer and then organised by subject and in date order. A reference is given for the location of the poster or the source of the image. The posters reproduced from illustrations, in black and white, are those that I have been unable to examine personally and this is stated in the catalogue. I have added brief

biographical details, where known, of as many of the designers as possible.

Dating the posters exactly has proved extremely difficult. Very few of the posters include any reference to the exact date of their production. This might usually have been part of the designer's signature or included in the publication details in the lower margin. The RoSPA publication details include reference numbers but these do not seem systematic and do not include a date code. Furthermore, it should be recalled that RoSPA poster campaign routinely re-published designs so that it is possible, for example, for a poster to have been designed and printed at quite distant intervals. In addition, there is no way of knowing if, when and under what circumstances, RoSPA withdrew poster designs from circulation. It is probable that they simply chose not to republish certain designs after a certain period. The prevailing graphic output of the RoSPA poster campaign remains, within the limits described above, fairly coherent until about 1955. The later evolution of the RoSPA style is, first, toward a more literal and realistic representation of illustration where directed at adults and, second, towards the routinely anthropomorphised use of animal figures where directed at a younger audience.

The catalogue entries include the following fields of information

The catalogue entry number for the poster

The thematic group to which the poster belongs

The name of the designer

The title of the poster taken from the text message
of the poster

The publication date where known and the publication
details of the poster

A note of the printer's details and of the measurements
and paper size of the poster

A note of any published reference to the poster or a
source of the image

A capsule biography of the designer and a
bibliographic reference

The RoSPA archives in Liverpool include a list of possible subjects that might be suitable for poster subjects. The posters included in the catalogue have been grouped into larger thematic categories so that designs within these categories can be compared one to another.

The title of the poster is taken, where possible, from the text message in the design of the poster. This is the accepted practice within those poster catalogues that already exist.

The exact publication date of the poster is given where known. Posters produced during WW2 have the details of RoSPA in the lower margin along with those of the Ministry of Labour and National Service.

The posters are all printed using offset presses and the photo-litho process. They are all printed by Loxley Brother of Sheffield. The posters

are all a standard 20 inch by 30 inch size referred to by its paper size of double crown. There are a few examples of posters designed and printed as long narrow vertical strips. These are effectively half double crown size and were printed two-up to a sheet for the purposes of economy. Paper supply remained the responsibility of the printers throughout the war. Paper shortages seem to have been managed by Loxley's with some skill and there are only a few examples of these economised posters. It is probably true to say that the smaller posters were probably much less effective when displayed. If the posters are printed on both sides that is referred to by its technical description of "perfect" printed.

A source for the location of each poster is given. Where none has been found a reference for the printed reproduction of the image is given.

An index of designers is appended at the end of the catalogue. The index refers to the posters by reference to their catalogue entry number. The index has a thematic classification for each designer and is cross referenced with a thematic list of the RoSPA posters.

catalogue number 01

industrial safety poster – accident prevention (text only)

anonymous

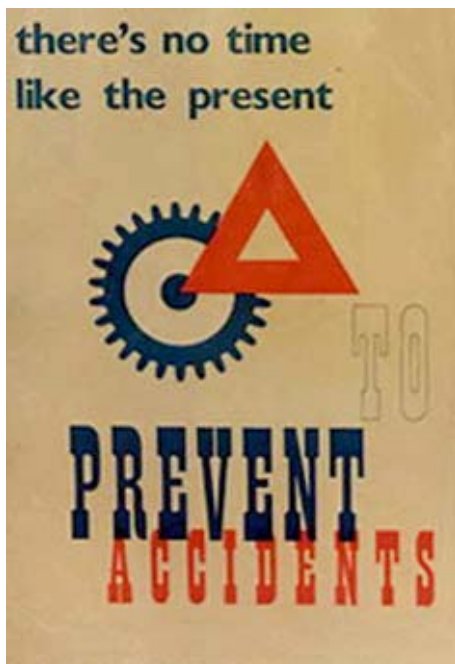
**There's No Time Like the Present
To
Prevent Accidents**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 02

industrial safety poster – accident prevention (text only)

anonymous

**Think Ahead – Be Alert
To Prevent Accidents
Is Not Cowardice But Common Sense**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 03

industrial safety poster – women and fashion safety

anonymous

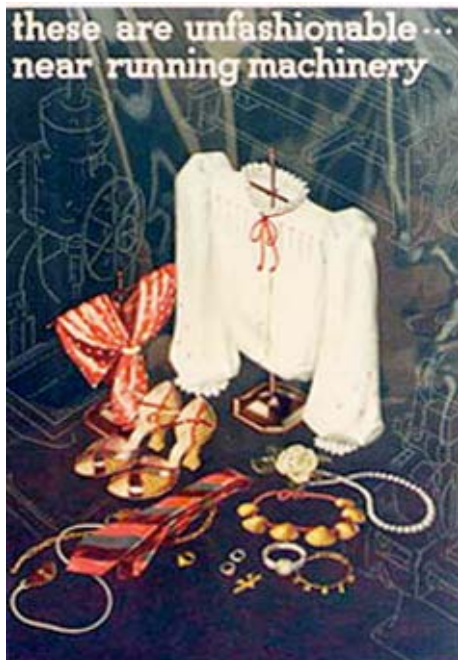
**These Are Unfashionable
Near Running Machinery**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 04

industrial safety poster – women and hair safety

anonymous

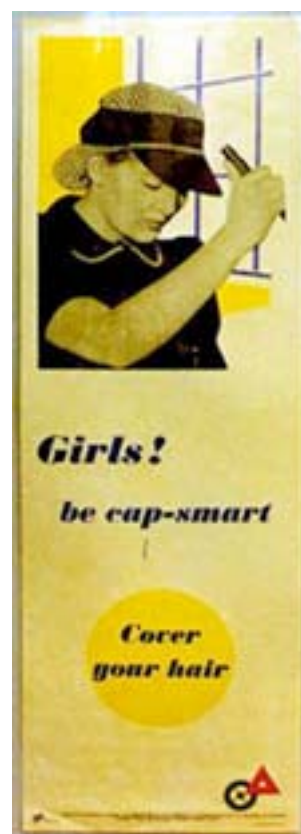
**Girls!
Be Cap Smart
Cover Your Hair**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

crown - narrow portrait (10 x 30 inches 25.4 x 76.2cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 05

industrial safety poster – overhead safety

Bruce Angrave

Sand From Under

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in "*Graphis*" magazine 1946, number 14, p173

no extant example of this work traced

Bruce Angrave was a commercial artist who worked during the 1940s and 50s. There are examples of his designs in "*Modern Publicity*" but no personal details of his career are given.

See Mercer F and Rosner C (1950) (1951) (1952)



catalogue number 06

industrial safety poster – accident prevention and production

Leonard Cusden

**Accidents
Are Weak Links
In the Chain of Production**

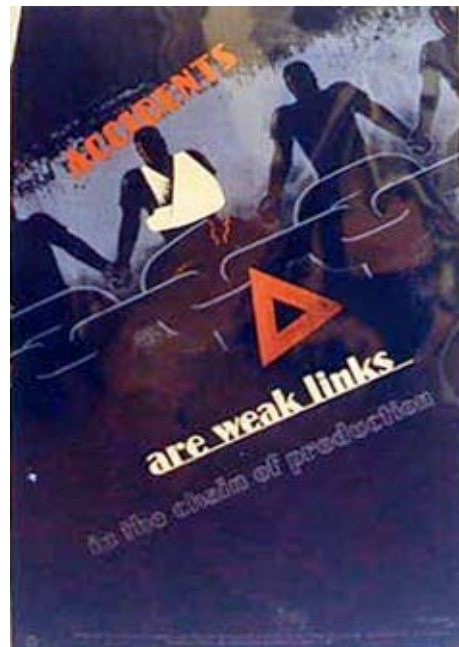
1941, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

Leonard Cusden was a commercial artist and who worked during the 1940s and 50s. He was closely associated with the RoSPA campaign after 1945 and became a creative director of RoSPA where his role was to advise other designers on the peculiarities of split-duct printing and production. He also produced posters for British Railways.



catalogue number 07

industrial safety poster – eye protection

Leonard Cusden

Warning Protect Your Eyes

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in *“Gebrauchsgraphik”* magazine 1950, number 2, p39

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 08

industrial safety poster - falls

Leonard Cusden

Warning (ladder)

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum

reproduced in "*Gebrauchsgraphik*" magazine 1950, number 2, p33



catalogue number 09

industrial safety poster – fire prevention

Leonard Cusden

Fire

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLF/133

printed by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum - pst 3367 a/b

perfect printed on the reverse with *Percy Vere* (catalogue number 43)



catalogue number 10

industrial safety poster – machine safety

Leonard Cusden

**For Cleaning, Maintenance and Repairs
Lock Off**

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in auction catalogue for Swann Galleries New York, lot 82,
sale of the 10th May 2004



catalogue number 11

industrial safety poster – overhead safety

Leonard Cusden

**Check the Weight
Don't Guess It**

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in auction catalogue for Swann Galleries New York, lot 82,
sale of the 10th May 2004



catalogue number 12

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Leonard Cusden

Yes - No

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in *“Gebrauchsgraphik”* magazine 1950, number 2, p40

no extant example of this work traced

see Holscher E (1950)



catalogue number 13

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

Robin Day

On The Bench Not Half On

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in the *“International Poster Annual”* 1952, p49 n45

Robin Day (born 1915) is best known as a pioneer furniture designer of the post-war period. He began his professional career in exhibition design and poster design. Between 1948 and 1949 he designed posters for RAF recruitment and for exhibitions. Day had met Peter Moro from the Design Research Unit during 1946 and together they received commissions for exhibition designs for the Central Office of Information and the Ministry of Supply. Day's participation in the Museum of Modern Art, New York, exhibition *“Low Cost Furniture”* in 1948 and his success in receiving the storage prize for the Museum's competition directed his professional activities away from graphic design. The RoSPA poster is likely to be from about the time he abandoned graphic design.

Lesley Jackson (2001) **Robin and Lucienne Day – Pioneers of Contemporary Design**
London, Barbican



catalogue number 14

industrial safety poster - eye protection

Tom Eckersley

Take Warning

Wear Goggles or Use a Screen

1941, published by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLM/99

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive

Imperial War Museum

Tom Eckersley was RoSPA's most prolific poster artist during WW2. He was born in 1914, in Salford, and attended Salford School of Art where he met Eric Lomers. Together they travelled to London and established themselves as commercial artists specialising in posters. They received commissions from London Transport, Shell and other important clients. The outbreak of war broke up the partnership. Eckersley recalled, in conversation with Paul Rennie (1994), that he had been able to combine design work with his war-work in the RAF. His association with RoSPA continued into the 1950s by which time he had joined the London College of Printing where he remained until his retirement. Tom Eckersley died in 1997.

See Eckersley (1954)



catalogue number 15

industrial safety poster - falls

Tom Eckersley

Asking For Trouble (broken ladder)

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA numbered MLJ/152

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 16

industrial safety poster - falls

Tom Eckersley

**Broken Rungs Cause Broken Limbs
Examine Ladders Before Use**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

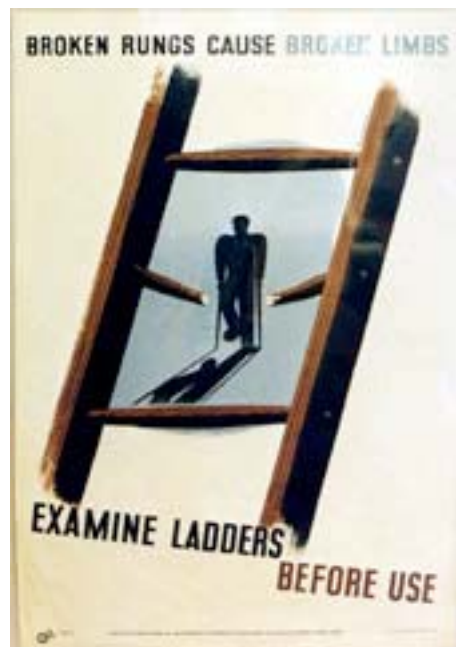
RoSPA, numbered ML/60

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 5191

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 17

industrial safety poster - falls

Tom Eckersley

Take the Right Steps

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA and numbered IND/B/8

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 18

industrial safety poster – falls

Tom Eckersley

Replace Covers Prevent Falls

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA and numbered IND/B/7

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College Printing, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 19

industrial safety poster – fire prevention

Tom Eckersley

Stamp It Out Prevent Fire

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in *“Gebrauchsgraphik”* magazine 1950, number 2, p34

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 20

industrial safety poster - first aid

Tom Eckersley

Get first Aid At Once

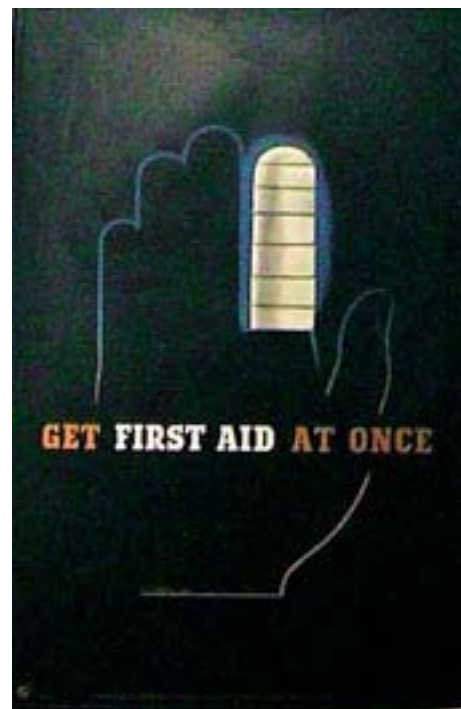
undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA and numbered IND/FA/21

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive

Michael Nathan Collection



catalogue number 21

industrial safety poster – foot safety

Tom Eckersley

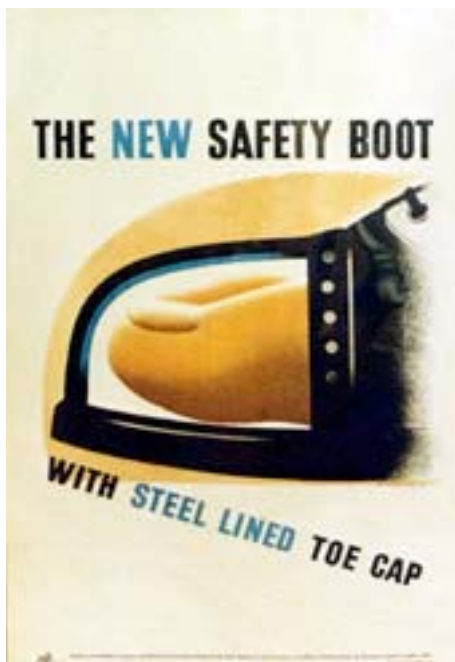
The New Safety Boot With Steel Lined Toe Cap

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 22

industrial safety poster – hand injuries

Tom Eckersley

Open Door For Germs Get First Aid For Cuts

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour

and RoSPA, numbered MLFA/141

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 23

industrial safety poster - hand injuries

Tom Eckersley

Broken Strands - Torn Hands - Watch out For Needling

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour
and RoSPA, numbered MLK/110

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 24

industrial safety poster – hand injuries

Eckersley

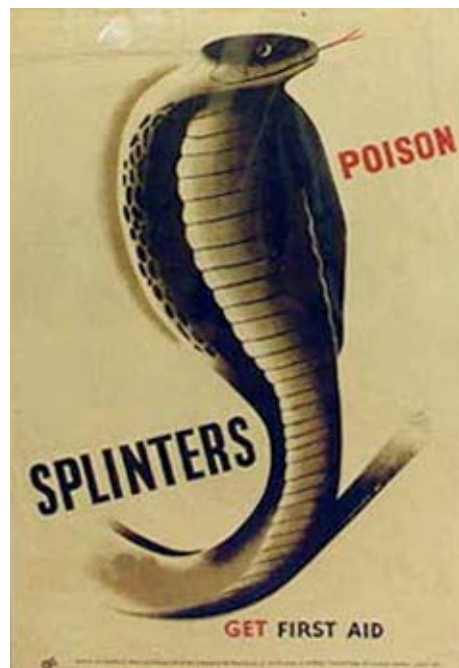
**Splinters
Poison
Get First Aid**

1944, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 25

industrial safety poster – lifting

Tom Eckersley

Handtraps

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA and numbered IND/A/13

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 26

industrial safety poster – machine safety

Tom Eckersley

Report Defects (guards)

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA and numbered INd/6/11

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 27

industrial safety poster – overhead safety

Tom Eckersley

Stand From Under

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA , numbered ML/82

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

crown - narrow portrait (10 x 30 inches 25.4 x 76.2cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive

This poster was printed half the normal double crown size for reasons of economy



catalogue number 28

industrial safety poster – overhead safety

Tom Eckersley

Stow Tools Safely - Think of the Man Below

dated 1942, published by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLC/101

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 29

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Tom Eckersley

Bad case - Not to Return to Work

dated 1944, published by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA , numbered MLD/198

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

crown - narrow portrait - 10 x 30 ins 25.4 x 76.2 cms

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive

This poster was printed half the normal double crown size for reasons of economy



catalogue number 30

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Tom Eckersley

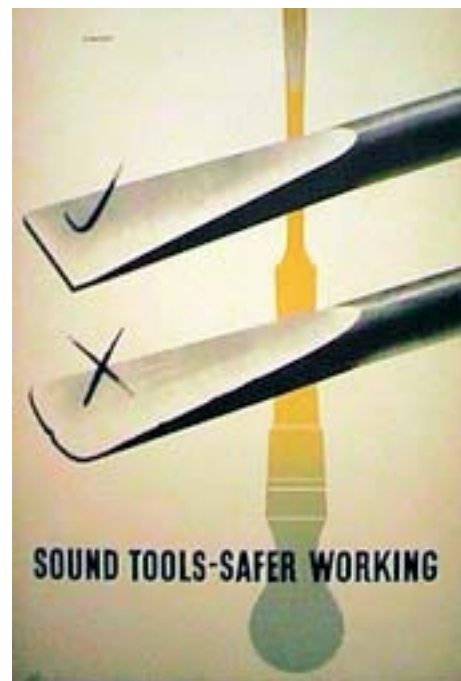
Sound Tools - Safer Working

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA and numbered IND/D/8

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive



catalogue number 31

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Tom Eckersley

Prevent Loose Heads - Inspect Daily

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive

Lynn Trickett Collection



catalogue number 32

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

Tom Eckersley

Stack Safely

dated 1944, published by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA , numbered MLL/219

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

crown - narrow portrait - 10 x 30 ins 25.4 x 76.2 cms

London College of Communication, Eckersley Archive

This poster was printed half the normal double crown size for reasons of economy



catalogue number 33

industrial safety poster – workshop discipline and safety

Tom Eckersley and Eric Lomers

Don't Talk To The Man On The Job

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in "*Gebrauchsgraphik*" magazine 1950, number 2, p36

no extant example of this work traced

Eric Lomers worked in partnership with Tom Eckersley during the 1930s. Lomers and Eckersley met at Salford School of Art in the 1920s. The outbreak of WW2 forced the design partnership to split up. A brief attempt to reform the partnership was made at the end of the war but seems not to have lasted. There is no work individually signed by Eric Lomers after the demise of his association with Tom Eckersley. It is probable that he drifted out of graphic design.



catalogue number 34

industrial safety poster – accident prevention and production

Abram Games

One of our Fighter is Missing If You are Off Work With an Accident

dated 1944 , published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

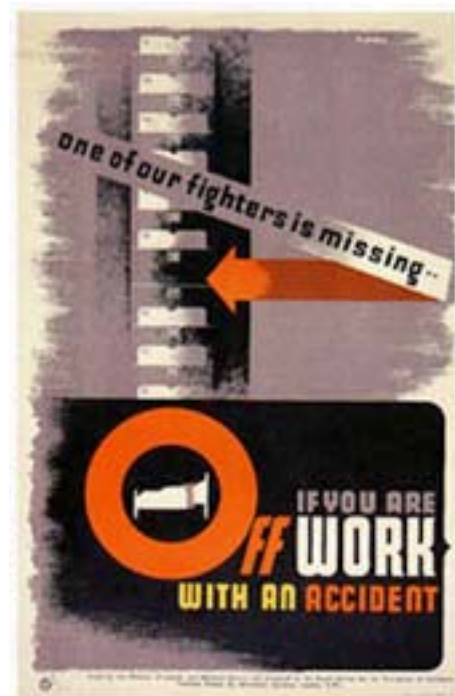
double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

Games Studio Archive

Abram Games was born in 1914 in the east end of London. His interest in poster design was provoked by the powerful styles of commercial art that he saw during the 1930s. The beginning of WW2 occurred just at the time that Games might have hoped to begin his own career as a designer. He was appointed Official Poster Designer to the War Office. In that capacity he produced a wide range of posters and graphic design for the military during WW2. Games saw the war as a conflict of systems shaped by their defining values. He was not afraid to use themes of social justice to advance the military arguments of propaganda. In consequence his work was sometimes too strong for his political masters. Games continued to design posters until the 1980s

See Games (1960) and Games Moriarty and Rose (2003)



catalogue number 35

industrial safety poster – lifting

Abram Games

Hands Clear - Not Here - When Stacking

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in the *"International Poster Annual"* 1949, p42, n90

Games Studio Archive



catalogue number 36

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

Abram Games

Prevent Accidents - Good Housekeeping is Your Business

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in the *"International Poster Annual"* 1951, p41, n33

Games Studio Archive



catalogue number 37

industrial safety poster – women and fashion safety

Golden

Factory Fashion Notes

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

No record of this artist has been found.



catalogue number 38

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

Golden

Keep The Gangways Clear

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 39

industrial safety poster – eye protection

Pat Keely

**Stop
Your Eyes Are Too Delicate To Trust To A Fellow Worker
Get First Aid**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in auction catalogue for Swann Galleries New York, lot 73,
sale of the 5th May 2003

Patrick Keely established himself as successful poster designer during the 1920s. His first designs are recorded for the Southern Railway from 1928. Thereafter he produced designs for the GPO and for London Underground in addition to continuing his relationship with SR. During WW2 he worked for both the MOI and for RoSPA. His propaganda designs are distinguished by a group of posters that he designed for display in Holland. Keely seems to have withdrawn from design after about 1950.

See Braden (1993)



catalogue number 40

industrial safety poster – eye protection

Pat Keely

Wear Your Goggles

dated 1941 and published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 41

industrial safety poster – hand injuries (machine safety)

Pat Keely

Keep Your Guard On - What Cuts Metal Cuts Fingers

dated 1941, published by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA , numbered ML/24

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 5192/3

perfect printed with text message on reverse



catalogue number 42

industrial safety poster – hand injuries (tools)

Pat Keely

Handles Protect hands

dated 1941, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 43

industrial safety poster – hand injuries (lifting)

Pat Keely

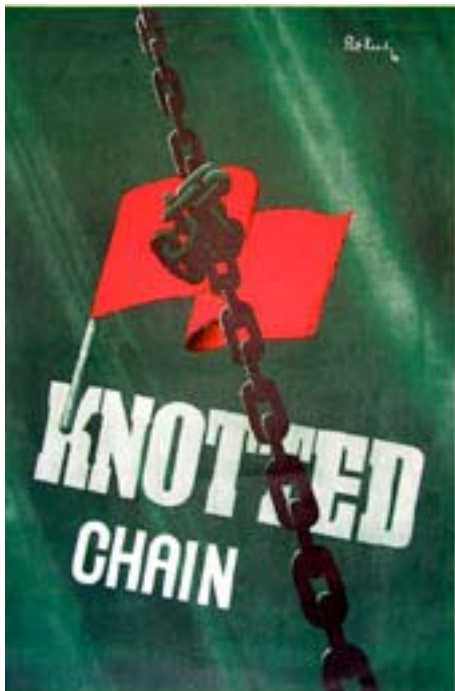
Knotted Chain

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in "*Gebrauchsgraphik*" magazine 1950, number 2, p40



catalogue number 44

industrial safety poster – machine safety

Pat Keely

Gear Wheels Catch Clothes

dated 1941, published by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered ML/53

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 5202



catalogue number 45

industrial safety poster –machine safety

Pat Keely

Replace Guards

dated 1942, published by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in “*Gebrauchsgraphik*” magazine 1950, number 2, p33

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 46

industrial safety poster – overhead safety

Pat Keely

Stand From Under

dated 1941, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 47

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Pat Keely

Beware Mushroomed Tools

dated 1941, published by the Ministry of Labour and

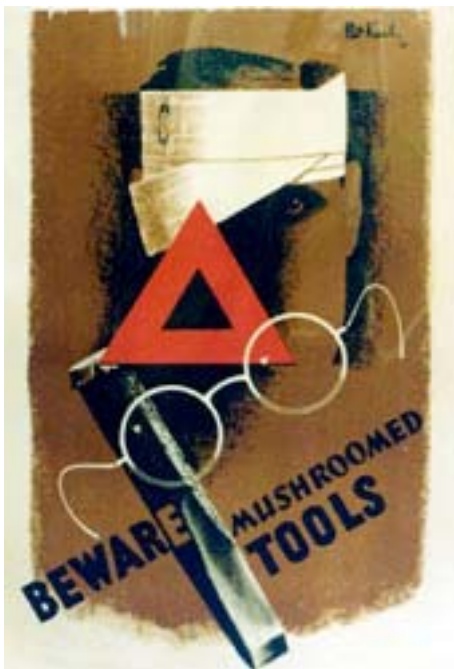
RoSPA, numbered ML/47

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 4657

Michael Nathan Collection



catalogue number 48

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Pat Keely

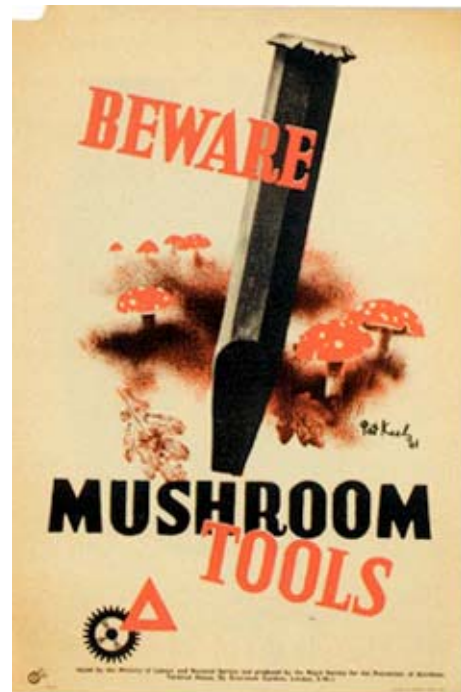
Beware Mushroom Tools

dated 1941 and published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in auction catalogue for Swann Galleries New York, lot 83,
sale of the 10th May 2004



catalogue number 49

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Pat Keely

Scrap It - Before It Scarps You

dated 1942, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in “*Graphis*” magazine 1946, number 14, p182

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 50

industrial safety poster - workshop discipline and safety

Pat Keely

Horseplay

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLN/244

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 5185/6

perfect printed with text poster on reverse



catalogue number 51

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

Pat Keely

Stack Tidily & Safely

undated, published during WW2 by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in “*Gebrauchsgraphik*” magazine 1950, number 2, p34

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 52

industrial safety poster – accident prevention and humour

F Kenwood Giles

**Dear Daddy
I Shouldn't Like
You To Come To my Birthday Like This
So
Please Try to Don't Get Accidented
Love Diana**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Hoover Institute Archives, USA

Kenwood Giles is recorded as a book illustrator during the 1920s and 30s. Kenwood Giles produced a small number of posters for RoSPA. There is no record of his personal details within the poster literature.



catalogue number 53

industrial safety poster – lifting

F Kenwood Giles

Get a Good Grip

undated, published 1945 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 54

industrial safety poster – machine safety

F Kenwood Giles

Replace That Guard - I wonder If I Did?

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLG/97

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 3677 a/b

perfect printed with *Be In The Fashion* on the reverse



catalogue number 55

industrial safety poster – women and hair safety (Russian solidarity)

F Kenwood Giles

Cover Your Hair for Safety Your Russian Sister Does

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 56

industrial safety poster – women and hair safety

F Kenwood Giles

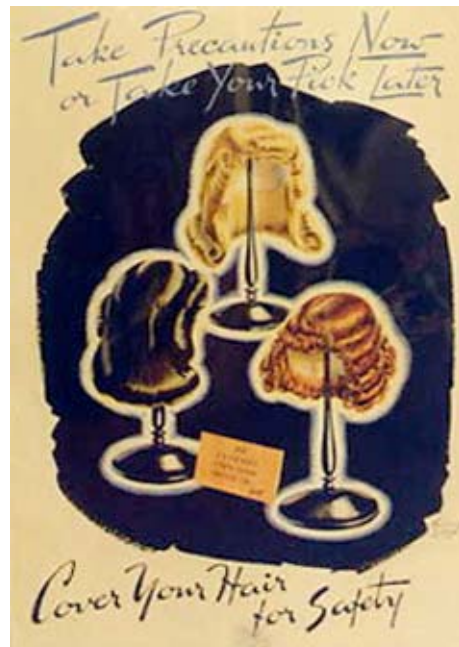
**Take Precautions Now
Or Take Your Pick Later
Cover Your Hair For Safety**

1943, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 57

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

F Kenwood Giles

Oil - Mop It Up

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in "*Gebrauchsgraphik*" magazine 1950, number 2, p38

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 58

industrial safety poster – lifting and splinters

Theyre Lee Elliott

Watch Points

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

Lee Elliott is recorded as working for London transport, the GPO and for Imperial Airways during the 1930s.

See Feaver W (Chairman) (1979) **The Thirties** London, The Arts Council



catalogue number 59

industrial safety poster - first aid

Jan Lewitt and George Him (Lewitt Him)

First Aid Post
The Smallest Wound May Cause The Biggest Trouble

dated 1944, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in "*Graphis*" magazine 1946, number 14, p183

no extant example of this work traced

Jan Lewitt and George Him were Polish émigré designers who arrived in Britain at the end of the 1930s. They are probably best known for their work as book illustrators during the 1940s. Their poster work during WW2 is distinguished by a highly developed sense of visual wit. They produced many poster designs for the GPO during the 1950s. George Him became a senior figure in Britain's design establishment during the later 1950s.

See Braden (1993)



catalogue number 60

industrial safety poster - foot safety (humour)

Jan Lewitt and George Him (Lewitt Him)

Be Kind To Your Toes

dated 1942, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

reproduced in "Graphis" magazine 1946, number 14 p183



catalogue number 61

industrial safety poster – hand injuries (humour)

Jan Lewitt and George Him (Lewitt-Him)

If You Can't Grow Fingers - Grow Careful

undated, published during WW2 by General Stampers Ltd

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in "*Graphis*" magazine 1946, number 14, p172
and Eckersley (1954) p85

also included in *Hazard - Health and the Workplace over 200 Years*
an exhibition at The People's History Museum, Manchester and
organised in association with the Centre for Occupational and
Environmental Health, University of Manchester, 2005



catalogue number 62

industrial safety poster – lifting (humour)

Jan Lewitt and George Him (Lewitt-Him)

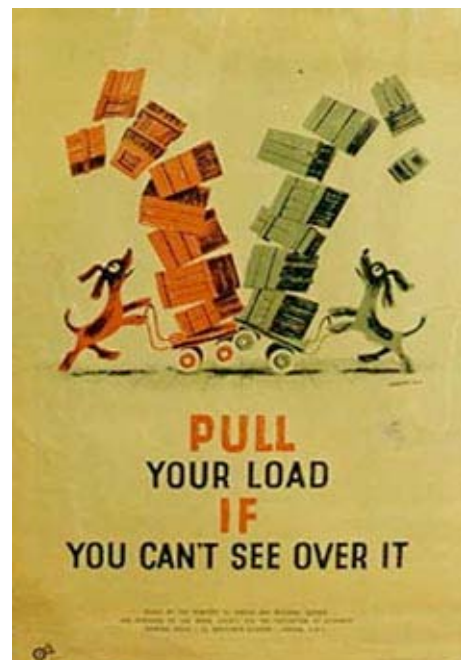
**Pull Your Load
If
You Can't See Over It**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



catalogue number 63

industrial safety poster - eye protection

Mendoza

Beware Eye Pickers

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

Mendoza seems to have been a cartoonist's nom de plume. Beyond the work for RoSPA no record of his career exists and it is impossible to speculate on the details of his life and work. A Peter Mendoza is listed as a contributor to an advertising campaign for ICI entitled "*Aspects of Industry.*"



catalogue number 64

industrial safety poster – humour (comic strip)

Mendoza

Percy Vere

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

one from a series of posters (see V&A)



catalogue number 65

industrial safety poster – falls

Arthur G Mills

Fence or Guard All Openings With Double Rails

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLB/187

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 5189/90

perfect printed with Harry Rowntree's *Think Twice* on reverse

Arthur Mills produced a small number of poster designs for RoSPA during WW2. There is no further record of his work beyond that and it is impossible to speculate on the details of his life and work.



catalogue number 66

industrial safety poster – machine safety

Arthur G Mills

Keep That Rest Up

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in *“Gebrauchsgraphik”* magazine 1950, number 2, p40

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 67

industrial safety poster – falls

Desmond Moore

Fence All Openings

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in *the "International Poster Annual" 1949, p45, n99*

no extant example of this work traced

Desmond Moore produced a small number of poster designs for RoSPA during WW2. There is no record of his career beyond these posters and it is impossible to speculate about the details of his life and work.

Richard Eckersley recalls (in an email to the author) that Moore and Eckersley were close friends and that Moore shared the Eckersley house.



catalogue number 68

industrial safety poster - first aid

Desmond Moore

Get First Aid

undated published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA , numbered MLFA/251

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

illustration taken from "Gebrauchsgraphik" 1950

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 3380/1

perfect printed with *Rogue's Gallery* on reverse



catalogue number 69

industrial safety poster – tool safety

Desmond Moore

Made to Measure - Right Spanner Right Nut

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLD/241

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum - pst 0625

perfect printed with *Not Your Job...* on reverse



catalogue number 70

industrial safety poster - eye protection

G R Morris

Protect Your Eyes

dated 1944, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 0006 ab

perfect printed with *Eyes Cannot Be Replaced* on reverse

G R Morris is first recorded as a contributor to the advertising campaign of Shell-Mex and BP during 1938. His work for RoSPA during WW2 is remarkable for its sophisticated use of photographic elements in poster design. Morris designs were chosen by Tom Eckersley as illustrations for his *"Poster Design"* from 1954 which is evidence of the esteem in which these designs were held. No record exists of Morris designs after the end of WW2 and it is impossible to speculate on his life and work beyond 1945.

Richard Eckersley recalls (in an email to the author) that Morris was an American. His later life was ravaged by the consequences of an addictive personality disorder.

See Braden (1993)



catalogue number 71

industrial safety poster - eye protection

Eyes Cannot Be Replaced

G R Morris

dated 1944, published by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum - pst 0006 ab

perfect printed with *Protest Your Eyes* on reverse

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection



catalogue number 72

industrial safety poster - first aid

G R Morris

Don't Trust to Luck - Get First Aid

undated published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in Eckersley *"Poster Design"* 1954, p38

Paul & Karen Rennie Collection



catalogue number 73

industrial safety poster – tool safety

G R Morris

Scrap

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in “*Gebrauchsgraphik*” magazine 1950, number 2, p36

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 74

industrial safety poster – women and hair safety

G R Morris

**Be In The Fashion
Cover Your Hair**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered ML/40

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 4656 a/b

perfect printed with text only message poster



catalogue number 75

industrial safety poster – eye protection

Manfred Reiss

Get Skilled Aid - Eyes are Delicate

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

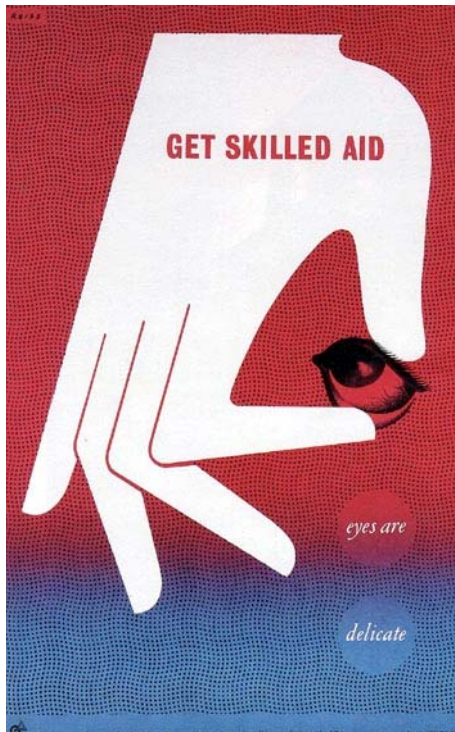
printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection

Manfred Reiss was an émigré Swiss designer who arrived in Britain at the end of the 1930s. His designs for RoSPA and for the GPO all date from the very end of the war. His post-war career included work for the GPO and in book illustration and design for the pioneer book publisher Maxfield Parrish. Manfred Reiss died in 1987.

See Braden (1993)



catalogue number 76

industrial safety poster – lifting

Manfred Reiss

Don't Carry a Load You Can't See Over

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in the *"International Poster Annual"* 1949, p44, n95



catalogue number 77

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

Manfred Reiss

The Foundation of Safety is Tidiness

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in the *“International Poster Annual”* 1949, p45, n102

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 78

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

Manfred Reiss

Pick It Up (nail)

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in the *“International Poster Annual”* 1951, p41, n33

no extant example of this work traced



catalogue number 79

industrial safety poster - eye protection

H Arnold Rothholz

He didn't use Eye Protection - Do You?

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in the *"International Poster Annual"* 1949, p45, n101

Rothholz Studio Archive

Hans (AR) Rothholz came to Britain in 1933 as a teenager and attended Willesden School of Art. His career was effectively interrupted by the outbreak of WW2 when he was interned and subsequently deported to Canada by the British authorities. His designs for RoSPA therefore come from the very beginning of the war or from its end. He worked as a poster designer, graphic designer and advertising art director until the 1960s. During the 1950s he produced a set of accident prevention posters for British Rail.

See Braden (1993)



catalogue number 80

industrial safety poster – falls

H Arnold Rothholz

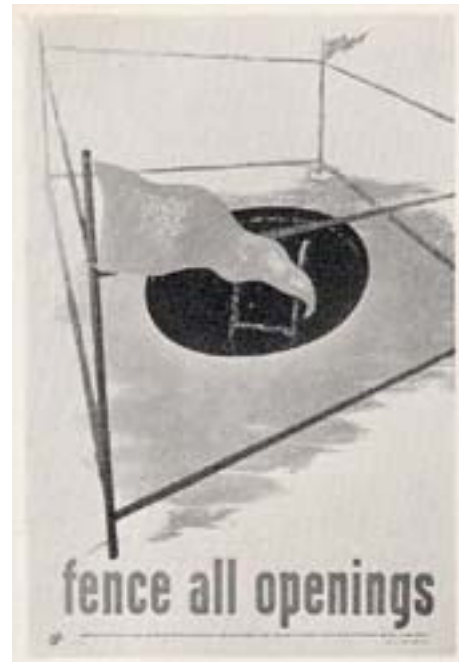
Fence All Openings

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Rothholz Studio Archive



catalogue number 81

industrial safety poster – lifting

H Arnold Rothholz

Right - Wrong

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

ex F H K Henrion studio

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection



catalogue number 82

industrial safety poster – safety clothing

H Arnold Rothholz

**Cut em Short or Roll em Up
Long Sleeves Cause Accidents**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

ex F H K Henrion studio

Paul and Karen Rennie Collection



catalogue number 83

industrial safety poster – women and hair safety

H Arnold Rothholz (monogram AR)

Be In The Fashion Cover Your Hair

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and

RoSPA, numbered MLM/120

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

perfect printed with Mendoza *Percy Vere* on reverse

Imperial War Museum Collection - pst 4655 a/b

Rothholz Studio Archive



catalogue number 84

industrial safety poster – women and hair safety

H Arnold Rothholz

**Be in the Fashion
Cover Your Hair**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

Rothholz Studio Archive



catalogue number 85

industrial safety poster – workshop discipline and safety

H Arnold Rothholz

No Room For Horse-Play Here

undated, published 1945 or after by RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

reproduced in *“Gebrauchsgraphik”* magazine 1950, number 2, p35

Rothholz Studio Archive



catalogue number 86

industrial safety poster – workshop neatness and safety

H Arnold Rothholz

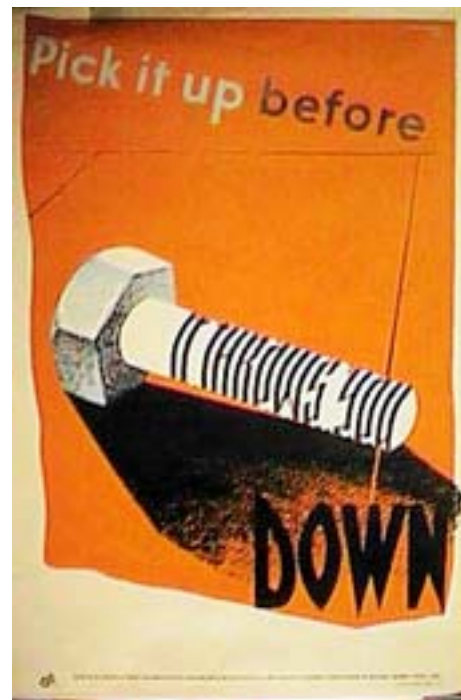
Pick It Up Before It Throws You Down

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Rothholz Studio Archive



catalogue number 87

industrial safety poster – humour (machine safety)

Harry Rowntree

**Think Twice
Before You Risk an Accident
You Can't Fight a Machine**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection

Harry Rowntree is recorded as an book illustrator during the 1920s and 30s.



catalogue number 88

industrial safety poster – humour

Harry Rowntree

**It's Worth
Going Out of Your
Way to Avoid
An Accident**

undated, published during WW2 by the Ministry of Labour and RoSPA

printed photo-litho offset by Loxley Brothers, Sheffield

double crown size (20 x 30 inches 50.8 x 76.2 cms)

Imperial War Museum Collection



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These fall into five categories

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The RoSPA Archives are held in the Special Collections of the Library,

University of Liverpool

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D.266 Archives of the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents 1917-2002

List of boxes and files consulted

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1938, 1942-2002 (D.266/1)(D.266/2/1A-6)

National Executive Committee 1932-1994 (D.266/2/8/1-30)

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Publicity Committee papers 1917-1972 (D266/2/1A-6)

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Note

I have collated all the Orwell references together in addition to listing them by author in the main body of “secondary sources.”

Similarly, I have grouped all the Gramsci references together.

I have entered the appropriate references under both “Fougasse” and K Bird.

Annuals Journals and Articles

An important source of information relating to the history and graphic development of poster art are the annual reviews of graphic design and advertising, the monthly magazines, quarterly journals and specific articles within all of these. For the period covered within this thesis the most useful references are listed below.

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Special Collections (RoSPA Archive)

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The Victoria and Albert Museum, London

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addendum the thesis is available online from

www.rennart.co.uk/thesis.pdf

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