

## Fougasse - Cyril Kenneth Bird (1887 - 1965)

In the early 1920s readers of Punch began to notice the cartoons of an artist who had made his first appearance in the magazine during the First World War. His style was developing rapidly into a kind of minimal art. He signed himself "Fougasse."

His real name was Cyril Kenneth Bird, but as there was already a Punch artist who signed himself "W.Bird" he chose a pseudonym. A "Fougasse" was a French mine, a rough and ready affair which might or might not go off: Kenneth Bird modestly thought the same was true of his cartoons.

He was born on 17 December 1887, he studied engineering at King's College, London. He arrived there in 1904 and became president of the University Union Society and of the Engineering Society. He also played rugby and boxed for the college. Kenneth found time also to attend classes at the Regent Street Polytechnic and at the School of Photo-Engraving and Lithography.

By the time of his marriage, Kenneth was a second lieutenant in the Royal Engineers. He was sent to Gallipoli with the 52nd Division in 1915, where he was blown up by a shell and subsequently invalided out of the Army.

It was obvious that Kenneth could not return to engineering. It was equally obvious that they could not live in any comfort on his meagre pension from the Army. His first thought was to write short stories. These were sent back with rejection slips. He turned from writing to drawing.

Fougasse's first cartoon in Punch appeared in the issue of 16 July 1916. Signed "Fougasse," it was called "Wars Brutalising Influence." It comprised two drawings. The first showed a young officer whose immaculate, dandified uniform is straight out of a military outfitters catalogue. In the second sketch, which is executed with panache and melodramatic chiaroscuro, the prim young officer has changed into a jutting jawed, pipe-smoking veteran whose uniform has evidently seen active service.

At first Fougasse drew heavily on his war service for subjects but as British interest in the war years faded, Fougasse turned his attention to social life in Britain, in particular the social life of the upper middle classes, to which he and his wife belonged and for whom Punch was still largely produced. In 1937 Fougasse became Art Editor of Punch, he restyled the magazine and improved its typography.

With the outbreak of war in 1939, Fougasse offered his services free of charge to any ministry who wished him to design posters. The posters for which Fougasse is perhaps better remembered than for any of his purely comic work, are the "Careless Talk Costs Lives" series, which showed Hitler and Goering materialising in the unlikeliest of places. But he also designed a wide variety of other propaganda posters, exhorting people to save paper, send books to the Forces or join the different training corps.

In 1949, on the retirement of his friend E.V. Knox, Fougasse accepted the post of Editor of Punch - with genuine reluctance. Fougasse was only the seventh editor of punch since the magazine was founded in 1841, and the first to have drawn his way to the editorial chair.

Kenneth's aim was to keep Punch as the British tradition it had been for so long.

He retired in 1953 but continued to draw for the magazine. He died in 1965.