

## As a child

I was born in Sydney, Australia to an English father and a librarian mother - who is mostly to blame for my love of books. I spent much of my childhood playing and arguing with my two sisters, kicking a football (or soccerball as it's called in Australia) and skateboarding. Partly because I wasn't trying very hard at school my parents offered to send me to a strict, all-boys school, which I gladly (foolishly) agreed to in exchange for a new skateboard. Everyone at the school was meant to play rugby and do rowing, neither of which I was much good at because I was about a foot smaller and two stone lighter than anyone else. But I loved art class, where size didn't matter, and discovered that I also liked learning. So I began to draw and learn, and I haven't stopped since.

## As an adult

I studied architecture at university for almost a year but quit when I realised I didn't like buildings and was no good at math. I then studied business and became an international coal salesman, which I quit when I realised I didn't like coal and was no good at selling. It was at about that time I decided that I wanted to be a journalist and see the world. I had no idea how to do the former but the latter was clearly going to involve travel, so I packed my bags and flew to London. The problem of getting started in journalism was solved with the help of a friend with whom I started a tiny magazine with a big name: the 'Hampstead Arts and Literature Review'. That do-it-yourself job helped me get a real job and I went on to write for lots of news outlets including the BBC and the New York Times. All this time I was still drawing and some people thought it was good enough to exhibit in cafes and galleries, which was nice. While in London I met and fell in love with a French girl, who I later married, and we moved to France for no good reason that I can recall but which nonetheless has worked out wonderfully well. A little while after moving to France I had children (with a lot of help from my wife) and started writing and drawing stories to amuse them, which is how McSnottbeard came into my life.

## As an author-illustrator

I work from home, which is in a small village located on the Seine just outside of Paris. My office is perhaps the most incredibly messy room to never have been officially declared a waste dump. I always write and draw stories at the same time as I find that the one feeds creativity in the other and because I am hopeless at sticking to any single activity for long periods of time. I do most of my best writing really late at night, though that's probably because I am usually exhausted first thing in the morning after I have spent the previous night staying up way too late in the mistaken belief that I do my best writing really late at night. All my drawings are sketched in pencil - usually twenty or so times while I wrestle them into something like a final version. They are then recopied using a light board, pens, Indian ink and often quite a few bad words when my hand slips and I have to start all over again.

## Ten things we didn't know about Paul

1. I love beaches but really dislike sand.
2. My favourite food is meat pies with tomato sauce
3. I eat a lot of sweets but have never had a tooth cavity.
4. I was born in Australia, lived in England and now live in France - and I love them all.
5. I am not at all scared of spiders. Not even a little bit.
6. Horses don't seem to like me.
7. I actually quite like beans, despite what I write in all my books.
8. I am a really bad speller.
9. I have always supported Everton Football Club – though I can think of no reason why as I grew up 10,000 miles from Liverpool where they play.
10. I am still a little afraid of the dark.