

Quakers & the First World War

LIVES & LEGACIES

Quakers on the Home Front



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Introduction

Faced by the First World War, Quakers wondered what should they do – fight against Germany, fight against killing, or find another way? The decisions they made would influence the Religious Society of Friends for decades to come.

The Religious Society of Friends – whose members are known as Quakers or Friends – believe that everyone can experience God and that there is something of God in everyone. The belief that all life is precious has informed the group's historic commitment to peace and peacemaking. When the First World War began in August 1914, these values were tested and within eighteen months were under even greater strain.

This booklet tells of some of the many activities of Quakers on the 'home front' during the war. It is focused largely on Birmingham for a number of reasons: the interests and location of the volunteers on the project, the nature and survival of the records, and the sheer volume of activity that took place in the city. It recounts how Quaker businesses responded to the war, and discusses Friends' activism for peace, their support of non-combatants such as refugees and 'enemy aliens', and their broader role in social welfare.

It also explores briefly how the legacies of the conflict continued to occupy their interest and time well into the interwar period.

This booklet is one of a series by the 'Quakers & the First World War: Lives & Legacies' collaborative project, run by Central England Quakers and the University of Birmingham and supported and shaped by volunteers. In many cases different volunteers have written different pages, and brief overviews of complex national and international events are included alongside detailed local stories from the central England area. Funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Voices of War and Peace First World War Engagement Centre, the project builds on the 2015 exhibition *Faith & Action: Quakers & the First World War* held at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery.



Quakers and Peace

The history of the Quaker peace testimony is usually considered to originate in a declaration to Charles II in 1661. This document sought to distance Friends from armed rebellion, and stated that Quakers ‘utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons.’

Friends played a significant part in the broader peace movement during the nineteenth century. They were active in organisations such as the Peace Society, and individual Quakers took a stand at times of national conflict such as the Napoleonic, Crimean and the Franco-Prussian Wars.

The ‘Quaker Renaissance’ of the late-nineteenth century reinvigorated the peace testimony. This period coincided with the South African ‘Boer’ Wars. Despite the fact that Friends were divided on these conflicts, they gave added impetus to the renewal of Quaker pacifism.

The rejuvenation of the peace testimony reached a climax during the First World War. The most obvious indication of this was the stand made by conscientious objectors and their supporters. However, Friends’ witness for peace manifested itself in various other ways during the war. For example, some Quakers

were engaged abroad in the work of the Friends’ Ambulance Unit and the Friends’ War Victims’ Relief Committee (see separate booklets for both themes). It also manifested in a range of activities on the home front, many of which appear in this booklet.

After the war, the All-Friends Conference of August 1920 reasserted the peace testimony as a fundamental part of Quakerism. Ideas developed by the Committee on War and Social Order (see p.18) laid the foundations for how peace and peacemaking would be carried forward in the social and political contexts of the coming decades.

The Friend and the War

The Friend is a weekly journal produced by and for Quakers. Though proudly independent of official structures, it reports news of Friends and meetings as well as articles of religious and spiritual interest.

During the 1914-18 war, it added to its content regular reports on the peace service of the Society of Friends. From these we can follow the work done by three main bodies, the Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee, the Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU), and the Friends' Emergency Committee, as well as the peace meetings and other efforts of local Quaker meetings. As was the custom then, from time to time *The Friend* published lists of subscriptions to such bodies. We learn from this that leading Birmingham Quaker and businessman George Cadbury contributed £250 a month to the FAU.

and their lack of understanding of the law. Some were happy to give COs absolute exemption, others thought that it was not within their powers and would only give exemption from combatant service.

The Quaker settlement (later college) at Woodbrooke was described at a local tribunal as 'dangerous' because of the help it gave to COs. Nevertheless, A. Barratt Brown, who taught there, was given absolute exemption, and H. G. Wood was given exemption on condition that he remained in his post.

From March 1916, *The Friend* began a new weekly section which followed the fortunes of the conscientious objectors (COs) as they went before tribunals, were arrested as deserters, court martialled, and imprisoned. The detailed reports, some reprinted from other newspapers, give a vivid picture of the inconsistency of the tribunals

‘Enemy Aliens’ and Birmingham Quakers

On 5 August 1914, the day after the declaration of war, the Aliens Restriction Act was passed. The Act restricted the movement of foreigners and migrants to, from and within the UK. Furthermore, all Germans and Austrians, as well as their British wives, were required, by law, to live in designated areas and to register their residency with the authorities by mid-August or face a fine of £100 or imprisonment for six months.

On 7 August 1914, the Home Office issued orders to detain all those considered to be ‘dangerous’. By the end of August 4,800 were interned. Many had been living and working in Britain for years, even decades.

Sophia Sturge, peace campaigner and Quaker from Birmingham, wrote to a fellow Quaker asking for help to be provided to all enemy aliens. Her plea resulted in the establishment of the nationwide Friends’ Emergency Committee (FEC). The Committee provided help to enemy aliens, including: financial advice, clothing, food and supplies for the internment camps, and support for families.

Birmingham Friend J. Hotham Cadbury coordinated fundraising and offers of employment to aliens to relieve their situation. Other

collections were organised: local Quakers, for example, with the help of the Bull Street Social Union, distributed Christmas presents in December 1914 to the children of 42 families. Throughout the war the Birmingham Committee organised over 300 visits to local ‘enemy alien’ families.

Life in the internment camps for men was soul destroying, with many experiencing mental health issues. The FEC were active in supporting detainees and J. Hotham Cadbury was very influential in this area. A 1915 visit to the Douglas internment camp (Isle of Man) revealed that the inmates found it difficult to adjust to a life of enforced idleness. Consequently, Hotham Cadbury worked with the camp committee and the Commandant to bring about change.



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The introduction of a library, art school, schoolroom, tailor's, barber's, carpenter's and shoemaker's shops provided the inmates with welcome opportunities and employment. Many detainees spent their time manufacturing products, and Quakers were active in trying to find buyers. One of the FEC visitors to the internment camps, Canadian Friend Robert W. Clark, wrote to Woodbrooke to see if items could be sold there. Specially-designed 'flat pack' furniture was made and sent to France for use by the Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee for the rebuilding of homes for French refugees.

As well as aiding inmates, the work of the FEC raised the profile of Quakerism: Edwin Gilbert of Bournville reported that many inmates were reading Quaker books and that Quaker principles were providing comfort.

The FEC was also interested in the circumstances of British Civilians in Germany, thousands of whom were interned. The internees included, for example, William Thomas Powell, a Birmingham artist who was working in Saarbrücken when the conflict began. He was arrested on 5 August

1914 and spent the rest of the war interned in a camp built on a disused racecourse at Ruhleben outside Berlin.

A committee was founded in Berlin to provide support for those designated as aliens in Germany. It was led by the internationalist and pacifist Dr Elizabeth Rotten, a Swiss national born in Berlin, who had lectured in Newnham College, Cambridge, before the war. Rotten worked closely with the FEC, and became a Quaker later in life. Like their counterparts in Britain, members of the committee visited internees and provided support for their families.

By the time of the Armistice on 11 November 1918, over 32,000 'enemy aliens' had been interned. Over the next year, the majority were repatriated, without any of their belongings, back to countries some had not seen for decades, and in the case of their wives and children perhaps never. The FEC continued to offer support for those leaving and for others who stayed in Britain.



Belgian Refugees in Birmingham

In August 1914, neutral Belgium was invaded by German forces intent on reaching and fighting against France; its inhabitants fled across Europe. Britons felt that the war was not of the Belgians' making and would be short-lived, so 'The Plucky Little Belgians' were initially well received.

In September, Elizabeth Cadbury, an influential Quaker, was advised that 100 refugees would soon reach Birmingham. Cadbury established and chaired the Birmingham War Refugee Committee (BWRC). Over the next few years, it evolved into a large and complex organisation with several subcommittees organising housing, food, clothing, schooling, healthcare, and employment.

Many refugees arrived without any English and with nothing except the clothes in which they stood. They were greeted with coffee and buns at St Chad's Roman Catholic Cathedral, organised by the BWRC.

Several large houses were lent to the BWRC for the use of the Belgians: Sir John Holder's Moor Green House, the city council's Kings Heath House, and Quakers Geraldine and Barrow Cadbury offered Uffculme as a hostel.

Quaker Evelyn Sturge was the superintendent of the BWRC central offices and receiving home at 44 Islington Row. The home opened on 4 September when the first refugees arrived in the city. From here they were distributed to many other homes which were found across the city and beyond. The BWRC bureau for tracing lost relatives was also based here.

The Friends Institute at Moseley Road, Birmingham, provided temporary accommodation for the hundreds of refugees arriving daily. In the space of three days in October 1914 the building was adapted and equipped to accommodate 400 people.

War Refugee Committee

President:
THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE LORD MAYOR OF BIRMINGHAM.



Ecole Belge, Birmingham, 1918.

In October a home was opened in Bath Street, which received donations of food. It seems that if money was short, Birmingham people were still willing to contribute something, even if it was just a loaf of bread.

The BWRC was supported by subscribers, whose donations were supplemented by street collections. The funds were certainly needed: by January 1916 the Committee had dealt with 4,779 refugees. Quakers were at the forefront of the aid, but other religious groups actively contributed through Jewish Seder, theatre dances, Christmas Carol services at Birmingham's Roman Catholic St Jude's Church, to name just a few.

After the Armistice, the BWRC started to wind down, but continued to care about the refugees. A farewell event was held for the refugees in Birmingham Town Hall on 6 January 1919. The Committee arranged to distribute free oranges to the Belgians, most of whom were repatriated that month.

Geraldine Cadbury supervised a maternity home for Belgian refugees at 19 Carpenter Road, Edgbaston. By August 1916, 58 Belgian children had been born there. Geraldine and Elizabeth Cadbury were both awarded the medal of Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians for their work with refugees.

Belgian children attended local schools, but demand grew for tailored education to ease their return home. The Birmingham Belgian School (École Belge) opened in February 1916. Belgian teachers taught the children in the Belgian national languages.

Refugee Boys from Serbia

In addition to their support for Belgian refugees on the home front, Quakers in Birmingham also maintained a group of 25 Serbian boys. They were part of a larger group of 300 children brought to Britain by the Serbian Relief Fund, a British aid organisation with Quaker links.

A committee was formed to coordinate support for the children, with Elizabeth Cadbury as chair and William A. Albright as treasurer. They identified a house, The Elms in Selly Oak, to serve as a home for the boys, which became known locally as 'Serbia House'.

The boys, who were aged between 10 and 14, arrived in Birmingham on 20 May 1916, accompanied by their Serbian teacher. They were met from the train by a band of Birmingham Boy Scouts, and Elizabeth Cadbury recorded in her diary that they all '*marched up to the house with flags flying*'.

The boys were looked after by J. Douglas Maynard, who had previously undertaken relief work in Serbia, and his wife Adeliza. The boys attended local schools, and Alan Geale, a member of the Friends' Ambulance Unit who was based locally, acted as their scoutmaster.

Very little is known about the boys, their backgrounds, or what happened to them on their return to Serbia. A rare photograph of them with Maynard and Geale was reproduced in local newspapers and in the *Bournville Works Magazine*, presumably to help raise money for their support.



▲ Serbian refugee boys at Selly Oak, Bournville Works Magazine, August 1916.
Reproduced with the permission of the Cadbury Archive, Mondelez International.

Quaker Women and The Hague Congress

Many Quaker women supported one of the most controversial peace conferences of the war, The Women's International Peace Congress held at The Hague, 28 April – 1 May 1915. The Congress led to the formation of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

A British Committee of the Women's International Congress was formed and several women Friends appear on its list of members, including Isabella Ford and Ada Salter. The committee also included five Birmingham women, all Quakers: Maria Catharine Albright, Geraldine Cadbury, Sophia Sturge, Mary Snowden Braithwaite (the American-born former warden of Woodbrooke), and Ethel C. Wilson (also of Woodbrooke).

The Congress argued that international disputes should be settled by negotiation and arbitration rather than by war. 180 British women wanted to travel to The Hague and although 25 of them were given passports, they were prevented from travelling at the last minute by the British Government. They were attacked in the press as foolish, unpatriotic and pro-German.

In the end, only three British women were able to attend the Congress. Among the disappointed women who were refused passports were Catharine Albright, Geraldine Cadbury and her daughter Dorothy, Florence Barrow and her sister-in-law Ethel (wife of Harrison Barrow), and Sophia Sturge.

The Congress was chaired by the American Jane Addams of Chicago. After the Congress, she and four other female peace envoys travelled between Europe and America meeting national leaders, including the British Prime Minister. While she was in Britain in June 1915, Addams visited Bournville, Birmingham, and stayed the night with Elizabeth Cadbury.

The Congress also provided a stimulus for the formation of local committees of the Women's International League. The Birmingham branch was established in early 1915 and by October 1916 had 117 members.



Campaigns for Peace

Friends adopted a number of strategies to campaign for peace on the home front. They supported conscientious objectors and other non-combatants, such as refugees, and organised and attended political meetings. They were persecuted or ridiculed by many who disagreed with their actions.

A flavour of their activities can be gained from the report of Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting's Peace Committee for 1915. It recorded that it had met eight times during the year, and that dozens of peace addresses had been given to local societies. The members had also collaborated with the Fellowship of Reconciliation (a non-denominational Christian pacifist body, established by a group, which included Friends, in 1914) in organising a meeting at Birmingham Town Hall in July, where well-known suffragist, and secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Maude Royden addressed an audience of over 2,000 people. The year concluded with a peace conference at Bull Street, Birmingham, on 2 December, which was attended by 200 people.

Women Friends supported the national Women's Peace Crusade. On 29 July 1917 a peace meeting was held in Birmingham's Bull Ring as part of the Crusade. The local

press reported that a crowd of about 300 assembled in Old Square and marched to the Bull Ring. The principal speaker was Glasgow peace activist Helen Crawford, and the meeting was organised by Margaret Haly (a non-Quaker and former imprisoned suffragette) on behalf of the Women's International League and the Fellowship of Reconciliation.

An example of how Friends from the central England area came under suspicion by the authorities because of their pacifist stance can be found in the events of 6 November 1916. The police visited the homes of four local Quaker magistrates, William A. Albright, Harrison Barrow, Joseph Sturge (son of the prominent anti-slavery campaigner) and George Cadbury. The four were presented with a list of ten questions to test their loyalty. The police also inspected their cheque books to see whether they had donated money to anti-conscription organisations.

A Challenge to Militarism

In spring 1918, Birmingham was shocked by the sentencing of local Friend Harrison Barrow to six months hard labour in Pentonville Prison. Harrison was a respected local businessman, City Councillor, Justice of the Peace, and the son of a former Mayor Richard Cadbury Barrow.

In 1914, Harrison had been in line to be Birmingham's next Lord Mayor. He withdrew when war seemed likely, as he could not fulfil the military duties that were part of the role in wartime. During the conflict he was extremely active in national Quaker activities as Chairman of the Friends' Service Committee and in the Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee. He was a leading member of the Birmingham Citizens' Committee, which administered welfare to the families of servicemen.

In May 1918, Harrison stood trial in London's Guildhall with two other Quakers, Arthur Watts and Edith Ellis. As members of the Friends' Service Committee all three were held responsible for refusing to submit the pamphlet *A Challenge to Militarism* to the censor before publication, as required under the terms of the Defence of the Realm Act. The pamphlet described the stance taken by conscientious objectors and their imprisonment. On 24 May

the men were given six months imprisonment and Ellis a fine of £100, plus costs. After refusing to pay, she served three months.

The Birmingham Post was outraged and attacked Harrison in its pages describing his views as '*peculiar*' and demanding he resign from his public activities. He resigned as a City Councillor and as Chairman of the Executive of Birmingham Citizens' Committee. At his unsuccessful appeal hearing in July 1918, he conducted his own defence and argued for religious liberty of conscience and freedom of speech, even in wartime: '*I plead for our religious liberties which have been and are a priceless possession, that all men should be free to express their ideas of truth, and to contribute each his own share to the forming of a vision that will be the salvation of the peoples.*'

Quaker Businesses During the First World War

The First World War largely divided Quaker businesses and the people within them between those whose consciences prevented them from contributing to the war effort in any way, and those who understood the peace commitment differently and took a more pragmatic approach.

At the outbreak of war, many Quaker businesses were either involved in food and confectionery production, or in manufacturing. In the West Midlands, these included Cadbury's, the confectionery producer in Bournville, and Albright and Wilson, a phosphorus manufacturer in Oldbury. Both businesses quickly introduced support for workers and their families where men had been called up or volunteered for wartime service. The companies also both feared the impact war would have on their production and finances.

In December 1914, Cadbury's sent 69,000 chocolate boxes to hospital staff and wounded troops. Over the course of the war, and while it had to reduce the number of lines, demand far exceeded expectations. Success meant the firm had not needed to introduce short time for workers. After the Armistice, Cadbury's not only took on men unable to find work because of their wartime stance as

conscientious objectors, but also disabled veterans.

Affairs at Albright and Wilson were more difficult. Initially foreign orders and shipping were detrimentally affected. Some short time for employees was necessary. Later it was hard to procure raw materials and workers.

It was against this background that when Albright and Wilson was ordered by the government to produce grenades and taken over as a controlled establishment in June 1915, the balance of feeling was that the business should comply. However, the chairman W. A. Albright and another director resigned due to their belief that war and direct involvement in it were wrong. The war work fundamentally altered Albright and Wilson, in terms of both its future direction and its consequential loss of outside contracts.

Quaker Women and Social Reform

Before 1914, Quaker women in Birmingham played an active role in a variety of paid and voluntary educational and social welfare activities. This public social role continued during the war, but some of their activities took a different course due to the influence of the conflict.

By autumn 1914, national concerns were growing that disruption to family life and the social order was leading to a collapse of morality, particularly amongst working class women. A moral panic about drinking and morality centred on the wives of serving soldiers in Birmingham was exacerbated by the arrival of 15,000 women, many of them young, to work in munitions.

Quaker women were involved in a multitude of interventions designed to improve this situation. In Birmingham, for instance, a sub-committee of the Young Women's Christian Association, led by Elizabeth Cadbury, established a munition workers' hostel. It had rooms for 35 women to stay for a night or two before finding more permanent lodgings. It opened on 1 January 1916 and 91 women passed through its doors within the first two weeks.

Ethel Barrow (also known as Mrs Harrison Barrow) played an active part in the introduction of the first women police. A voluntary Women's Patrol Committee was formed with Ethel as Secretary. Fellow Quaker Marian Priestman was also a member. It co-ordinated a volunteer force of over 35 women who patrolled the streets regulating women's behaviour. They were identified by an armband and carried a card of authority from the Chief Constable.

These voluntary patrols were part of a campaign to introduce official, uniformed women police officers. Initially sceptical, the Birmingham Watch Committee (which oversaw policing in the city) finally agreed to employ two women police officers in May 1917. Mrs Rebecca Lipscombe and Mrs Evelyn Myles were later appointed. They did not have powers of arrest, and were limited to specific duties with women and children, in keeping with ideas about women's 'natural' roles and aptitudes.

Post-War Relief for Austria on the Home Front

Quakers were heavily involved in relief schemes in Central Europe during the post-war period. In addition to those individuals who travelled as relief workers to Austria, Germany, Russia, Poland and elsewhere, Quakers at home were prominent in raising money and awareness for the cause.

In December 1919, Birmingham's Lord Mayor William Adlington Cadbury formed a European Famine Fund Committee. Like the earlier activities for Belgian refugees, the committee drew from every major faith group in the city, but local Quakers were particularly active.

The Lord Mayor's Fund raised over £30,000 in two years and the money was used for relief work in Austria, Armenia, Hungary, Poland, Serbia and Russia. Most of the activity was in Austria, where the committee worked with the Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee workers led by Hilda Clark in Vienna (see separate booklet on relief work), and with the recently formed Save the Children Fund. Save the Children was founded in 1919 by the sisters Eglantyne Jebb and Dorothy Buxton who grew up as part of a landowning family at The Lyth in Ellesmere, Shropshire. Dorothy Buxton and her husband, politician Charles Roden Buxton, joined the Religious Society of Friends during the war.

The Lord Mayor's Fund paid for a children's home 'The Birmingham and District Famine Home for Children' or 'Birmingham Kinderheim' in Kitzbühel, Austria, and for two members of staff to work there. It opened in June 1920 and by the autumn over 145 children from Vienna and Innsbruck were living there.

The Lord Mayor's Fund closed in October 1921. The committee felt they should concentrate their efforts on helping poor people in Birmingham suffering from high levels of unemployment – a reminder of the long-standing tensions between support for overseas or home relief.



► Fundraising leaflet for the Austrian children's home, MS 3241/2. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.

From Vienna to Bournville

In 1920, Vienna came to Birmingham in the form of a group of eighteen Viennese girls, who were given homes in Bournville for over a year.

The girls arrived in Bournville on 29 October. *The Friend* reported their arrival in its edition of 19 November and described them as *'sweet-looking children of from 8 to 12 years of age, and all appeared to be very happy as they trooped into the Infants' School, many of them carrying all their personal possessions in a small bundle on their backs.'*

The author of the article concluded that *'True to the best instincts of the British race, the animosity felt towards our late enemies is being superseded by a genuine pity.'*

The visit was organised by Bournville Village Council and the girls were put up with local families. George and Elizabeth Cadbury contributed 15 shillings a week for the upkeep of each child. None spoke very much English, and on arrival they were each given a pocket dictionary as a gift. During their stay they attended the village school. The girls lived with local families for a year and returned to Vienna in September 1921. Again, *The Friend* reported on their return home and

described the tearful farewell scenes as the *'weeping'* girls said goodbye to their foster parents. It contrasted their *'healthy', 'plump'* and well-clothed appearance with the *'thin, emaciated and badly clothed'* children who had arrived a year earlier.

After their return to Vienna, the girls wrote letters to the Cadburys describing the hardships in Vienna and expressing their thanks for the gifts of Christmas chocolate that followed them home. These letters survive as part of the firm's archives in Bournville.



▲ The girls from Vienna with George and Elizabeth Cadbury, 1921, Library of Birmingham MS 466/8/53. Reproduced with the permission of the Cadbury Archive, Mondelēz International.

Foundations of a True Social Order

In 1918, London Yearly Meeting – the AGM of Quakers in Britain – approved a short text called Foundations of a True Social Order, which set out eight ideals about how society should be run.

‘The Fatherhood of God, as revealed by Jesus Christ,’ it began, ‘should lead us toward a brotherhood which knows no restriction of race, sex or social class.’

It went on to consider features of that brotherhood, including opportunities for education, freedom from poverty, simplicity in living, and mutual service.

The text was written by a War and Social Order Committee, which had been appointed as an official Quaker body in 1915 to consider the conditions that made war possible. One of the more radical members of the committee was Alfred Barratt Brown, a Birmingham Quaker, who was imprisoned in 1916 for distributing anti-conscription material and later for refusing military service (see p. 13).

The men and women of the committee were influenced by the social situation at the time – not only the war, but also communism in Russia and the women’s suffrage

movement. They drew on Quaker history, especially ideas linking simple lifestyles to social justice.

Once approved, the text was circulated to meetings in Britain along with questions for discussion – a familiar structure even today. Some Quakers would have liked something more practical, but the committee had decided to focus on the highest vision rather than the bare minimum.

The document’s aims still influence Quakers; they rephrase some of the language, but return to the text periodically. In the 1940s and the 1990s, the idea of revising it was raised, but this hasn’t happened yet. Even today, courses on the *Foundations* are run by Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham, where at least two of the committee members (Barratt Brown and John St George Heath) had taught before or during the First World War.

Interwar Legacies – Peace

The influence of the Foundations can be clearly seen in the many diverse interwar activities of Quakers in the central England area, such as the examples included below.

Peace campaigns continued to be a focus of activity. In May 1919, Theodora Mary Wilson was a member of the British delegation to the second congress of the Women's International League in Zurich. Also included in the delegation of 20 were fellow Quakers Ada Slater, Isabella Ford and Dr Ethel Williams.

Theodora was chair of the local branch of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and the local Women's Peace Crusade. She was also active in social and political issues and was elected as a Labour city councillor for Selly Oak in 1923. She later chaired Birmingham City Council's Maternity and Child Welfare Committee.

Local Quakers were active in numerous other peace initiatives in the interwar period, including the disarmament campaigns of the early 1930s. In 1931 a 'disarmament shop' was established in Bull Street, not far from where the Peace Hub stands today.

In the same decade, Friends again provided relief for refugees fleeing fascism, persecution and war in Germany, Austria, Spain and elsewhere. Individual Quakers were involved from the early 1930s, and in 1938 the Warwickshire Monthly Meeting established a 'Refugee and Aliens Committee' to provide a coordinated approach.

The Warwickshire Committee established hostels and clearing houses for refugees locally, with several premises again provided by the Cadbury family: William Adlington and Emmeline Cadbury offered Wast Hills Cottage and Allendale Cottage, George (Junior) and Elizabeth Cadbury, Windmill Cottage, and John Cadbury provided 7 Maple Road in Bournville. George Road Meeting equipped a flat in Lee Crescent, and many local Friends took refugees into their own homes.

Interwar Legacies – Social Friendship and Housing

Working constructively for peace also meant working across social and class divides. In 1917 Maria Catharine Albright was one of the primary founders of the Birmingham Women's Community Club.

Catharine was a former warden of the Birmingham Women's Settlement, where she had been an unpaid social worker with working class women and children. She had a long history of involvement in women's issues and adult education, as well as local Quaker meetings and initiatives.

The Community Club was established to promote friendship, social intercourse and education in citizenship for women across divides of social class and occupation. Catharine became its secretary, and explained that the name was chosen to reflect *'the spirit of good fellowship and loyalty to the common weal'*. The Club lasted throughout the interwar period and into the 1950s.

On her return to Birmingham from Quaker relief work in Poland in 1924, Florence Barrow was actively involved in the improvement of working class housing. The Birmingham Copec House Improvement Society Ltd. was

founded in 1925 and named after the Christian Conference on Politics, Economics and Citizenship held in Birmingham in April 1924.

One of Copec's aims was *'to humanise the relationship of landlord and tenant in this class of property'*. The organisation bought back-to-back slum properties, which it renovated and then rented out at fair rents. It later also built new properties and developed facilities, such as women's clubrooms and children's sandpits.

Florence sold her own house to buy the first properties, 19 back-to-back houses in Pope Street, Birmingham. She also acted as a rent collector in the city's Nechells area, and was Copec's Honorary Secretary from 1928 to 1954.

► Catharine Albright, c.1906, MS 162.
Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.



Interwar Legacies – Work with Unemployed People

Friends were also involved in schemes to help the unemployed. The Quaker 'allotments for the unemployed' scheme had first been set up in South Wales in 1926.

In 1931 Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting proposed a radio broadcast to raise money for a similar scheme in Birmingham, prompted by Hall Green Meeting. Local Friends participated in The Birmingham Allotments for the Unemployed Committee alongside the City Council and the cross-denominational Christian Social Service Committee.

Allotments were provided at several sites across the city. In 1935 it was reported that over 1,000 unemployed men had used the scheme during the previous year.

Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting established an Unemployment Committee, and by 1932 Friends' premises in Birmingham, Northfield and Coventry were being used as occupational centres providing training and work.

From November 1932, the Monthly Meeting's Kingstanding and Perry Common Occupational Hut Committee managed a centre which

provided training in carpentry, boot mending, weaving and metal work. Social events, a library, talks and sports were also organised.

An associated land scheme offered opportunities to grow vegetables and engage in animal husbandry to produce eggs, milk and meat.

From 1933, a large premises in Birmingham called The Beeches (previously used as a war convalescent hospital, holiday home for poor children, and continuation school) was in use as an educational centre for women. They engaged in handcrafts, talks on health and other issues, educational visits and social activities.



Legacies: Continuity and Change

This booklet demonstrates that Friends on the home front responded to the cataclysm of the First World War in diverse ways. The decisions made, both collectively and individually, would leave their mark on the Religious Society of Friends in Britain and its members throughout the twentieth century.

For the official committees of some central England Quaker meetings, life seemed to go on as usual, but quietly and at grassroots level, many Friends in the Midlands and elsewhere responded in whatever way they felt was best. Although the stories in this booklet focus largely on the Birmingham area, similar activities happened to greater or lesser degrees in Quaker meetings across Britain.

Many of the debates, ideas, and strategies developed during the war resonate strongly today. The war reaffirmed the peace testimony as a fundamental tenet of the Quaker faith, and it remains a central issue for Friends, whether engaged in challenging militarism or educating for peace.

There are echoes too in the social action of Friends. Although circumstances and contexts inevitably differ, inequalities and issues of social and economic justice in areas such as housing are still major concerns for twenty-first century Quakers.

Questions about our relationship with our European neighbours, and how we as a society respond to the global displacements of refugees and other migrants, are as controversial and pressing now as they were then. Remembering how individual Friends and meetings translated their faith into action a century ago enables us to reflect on our contemporary response to similar issues and concerns.

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Further Reading

- Martin Ceadel, 'The Quaker Peace Testimony and its Contribution to the British Peace Movement: An Overview', *Quaker Studies* (2002)

- Pink Dandelion and Rebecca Wynter (eds), special issue on Quaker responses to the First World War, *Quaker Studies* (December 2016)

- Thomas Kennedy, *British Quakerism 1860-1920: The Transformation of a Religious Community* (2001)

- Siân Roberts, *Birmingham: Remembering 1914-18* (2014)

The following collections at Birmingham Archives & Collections, Library of Birmingham were used for research: the archives of Central England Quakers (SF); The War Refugees Committee, MS 652; the Lord Mayors Famine Fund, MS 2341; Birmingham Women's Community Club, MS 3577; and *Women Workers*, June 1915. The WILPF archives at London School of Economics Archives and 'History box II file 2 – enemy aliens' at Woodbrooke Library were also used.

The Friend is a valuable source for all aspects of Quaker activities in this period. Copies are held at The Library of the Religious Society of Friends in London and Woodbrooke Quaker Studies Centre in Birmingham. It was used in this booklet in particular for pages 7-9, 12. For more on *Foundations of a True Social Order* see <http://www.quakerssocialorder.org.uk/>.

Blog entries by Eleanor Woodward on the archives of Central England Quakers were used to compile page 21. To read 'Occupational centres and land schemes' (2015); 'An educational holiday destination' (2015); 'Allotments for the unemployed' (2016) go to <https://theirironroom.wordpress.com/>.

Acknowledgements

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We would like to thank the AHRC Voices of War and Peace engagement centre for the funding that made this project possible. Thanks also to Professor Ian Grosvenor, Dr Nicola Gauld, Dr Kevin Myers, Dr Betty Hagglund, and all of our excellent volunteers and contributors, whose ideas shaped and informed this booklet and the project as a whole. Many thanks to Central England Area Meeting for all their input and to Claire Bowman, former Clerk. Sincerest thanks for the help and understanding offered by Melissa Atkinson, Libby Adams and all the staff at Friends House Library, as well as Jane Dawson and her team at Friends House. We would also like to thank: Dudley Quaker Meeting, the Friends Historical Society, Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Jo-Ann Curtis at Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, the Imperial War Museum, Eleanor Woodward and staff at Birmingham Archives, the Barrow family, Sarah Foden at the Cadbury Archive, Mondelēz International, *The Friend*, the designer, Katerina Portik, and the many readers from Central England Quakers who offered their thoughts on earlier drafts of the booklet.

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