

Quakers & the First World War

LIVES & LEGACIES

Conscientious Objection & Conscription



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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.

In March 1916 the first Military Service Act came into force in Britain, ordering young men to join the armed forces. This booklet tells the story of Friends and their dilemmas about fighting and wartime service, with a particular focus on Quakers from the central England area. It embraces soldiers killed on the battlefield, men who died for their pacifist principles, conscientious objectors, and the experiences of others, including women.

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.

The Stirrings of War

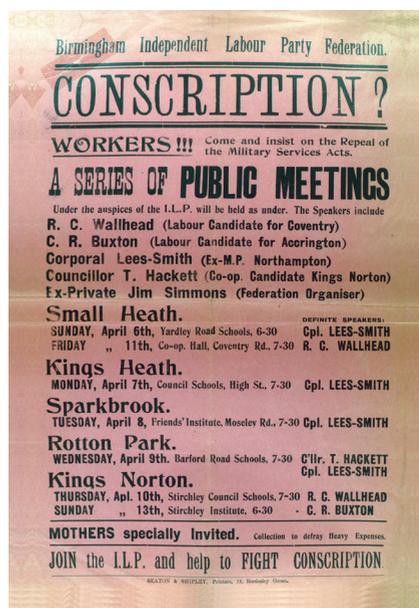
Britain declared war on Germany on 4 August 1914. Conscription officially began in England, Scotland and Wales on 2 March 1916. Neither of these events came as a surprise, yet individually and collectively Quakers struggled to find a unified response.

In 1895, a conference at Manchester had led to a new spirit of Quaker engagement with British social, civic and political life, and in the following years, young Friends argued for the renewal of peace as a foundation for Quaker faith and practice. At the same time, wider British society was dominated by patriotism and the Empire and, some felt, an increasingly militaristic atmosphere.

At the start of the twentieth century, and shaped by the 1899-1901 South African 'Boer' War, younger Friends were choosing different paths informed by their conscience: some were activists for peace, and, more controversial among some Quakers, a few had joined the army reserves, the Territorials.

One area uniting concerns about peace with those of the British Empire at large was the whisper, from 1909 onwards, that conscription – the state-ordered compulsion for men of 'fighting age' to join the military – would be introduced in Australia and New Zealand.

British-born Quakers were involved in working against the proposals in these two self-governing countries, which were part of the British Empire. Yorkshireman John P. Fletcher, for example, with the support of the main Quaker decision-making body in Britain, London Yearly Meeting, helped establish the Australian Freedom League, and also worked on anti-conscription in New Zealand.



▲ Poster for anti-conscription meeting, 1916, Jim Simmons Papers, vol 2. Reproduced with the permission of the Library of Birmingham.

Belief, War, and Conscription

Friends were among a range of people in Britain opposed to violence and conscription. Throughout the First World War there was an undercurrent of anti-war sentiment, despite significant and nationwide support for fighting Germany and its allies.

For faith groups such as Plymouth Brethren, Mennonites, Seventh-Day Adventists and Quakers, opposition to violence was fundamental; swearing oaths (such as that demanded for military service) was against Quaker beliefs too. Christadelphians and the International Bible Studies Association (now Jehovah's Witnesses) were also against the war and conscription, partly because they believed the level of state power exercised interfered with God's power. Individuals from numerous other denominations - including Anglicans, Unitarians, Methodists and Roman Catholics - also felt it was against their faith to participate in fighting, despite the pro-war stance of many mainstream churches.

Other opposition was political. Many on the Left believed in the international brotherhood of man: the First World War set brother against brother.

There were many for whom politics and faith combined. Doctor and Independent Labour Party activist Alfred Salter (1873-1945) wrote: *'Christ in khaki, out in France thrusting His bayonet into the body of a German workman... No! That picture is an impossible one, and we all know it'.*

Many of these groups and individuals met and cooperated in three organisations: the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FoR), Friends' Service Committee (FSC), and No-Conscription Fellowship (N-CF). FoR was established as a non-denominational Christian pacifist group in 1914; some of the founding members were Friends. Quakers and non-Quakers were involved with the FSC. Both of these bodies worked closely with the N-CF, formed in 1914 for anyone who opposed fighting, regardless of whether their objection was on religious, political, moral or humanitarian grounds.

Joseph Southall - Art, Pacifism and Dissent

Southall (1861-1944) was a Nottingham-born and Birmingham-raised Quaker and artist. His lifelong commitment to pacifism led him to campaign for peace throughout the First World War, in speeches, cartoons, images and paintings.

Southall lived in Birmingham for most of his life. He was a key member of the 'Birmingham Group' of artists, which was part of the Arts and Crafts movement. He was active in politics as a radical Liberal before the war and as Chair of the Birmingham Branch of the Independent Labour Party during it. He was too old to be subject to enlistment under conscription legislation.

As a committed Quaker and proponent of pacifism, he spoke and wrote in favour of peace and against conscription and produced anti-war cartoons and paintings. 'Equality of Sacrifice' (see right) was published in *Fables and Illustrations* (1918), which combined strong anti-war imagery with biting stories and satirical advertisements.

The title 'Equality of Sacrifice' evokes the political notion that the State should demand the same proportion from each person – but it seems Southall was suggesting the sacrifice of the First World War was unequal and that the burden was falling on poorer people.



Arthur Impey – A Quaker Who Fought

Arthur Elia Impey was born in 1885, the son of Frederic and Eleanor Impey, a well-known Quaker family living in Northfield, Birmingham. After attending Bootham School in York, he qualified as an accountant and worked for his uncle's firm, Impey, Cudworth and Co. of Birmingham.

In September 1914 Arthur applied for an army commission and later served as a Captain in the 79th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. Between August and November 1918 he was involved in the British advance from Albert to Maubeuge.

Arthur's diary describes his day-to-day life as a serving officer. On 3 September 1918, for example, he described an encounter with 'the enemy' and a small act of kindness between men of different armies.

'Whilst we were eating, the servants came in & said they had found a wounded Hun, so I went to have a look at him, & found him about a hundred yards away, lying by a quite fresh shell hole with a badly broken leg, a bullet through the knee ... I went back and told the others, and was more than a little tickled to see [a soldier], whom I had so often heard swear, in awful terms that no death was bad enough

for Hun machine gunners, to whom no quarter should ever be given – take him with his own hands a cup of tea & Bully beef & bread & butter, our lunch in fact, which the poor devil wolfed without a word, & the last we saw of him was being carried off by some of our stretcher bearers who turned up, the very picture of the vanquished, but by no means dishonoured enemy.'

Arthur's brother, Thomas Smith Impey, served in the Royal Flying Corps. His sister Elizabeth was killed in December 1915 when her ship the *SS Persia* was hit by a German torpedo en route to Lahore, India, where she was going to work at the Dufferin Hospital for Women.

Egbert Cadbury – War in the Air

One man born into a renowned Quaker family became well-known in the press as a flying ace. Egbert Cadbury, or Bertie as he was known, was the the youngest son of Elizabeth and George Cadbury, a founder of the famous Bournville chocolate factory.

A student at Cambridge at the outbreak of war, he joined the Navy and served on the HMS Zarefah and later HMS Sagitta before transferring to the Royal Naval Air Service.



Despite his military service his mother Elizabeth recorded in her journal that he was welcomed at his local Quaker meeting when home on leave. On 5 October 1914 Elizabeth wrote that *'Bertie was surrounded at Meeting by all the members congratulating him and talking to him; it was quite difficult to get away.'*

After completing his training he was stationed at Great Yarmouth and flew his first mission against German Zeppelins on 9 August 1915.

A letter of 19 September 1915 summed up his feeling about the war. Bertie wrote that although *'it is not such a bad life... everyone is sick of the war and all will be greatly relieved when this calamity ends and we are allowed to take up once more our normal occupations.'*

Bertie's exploits in the air led to public attention. In late November 1916 it was widely reported that he shot down a Zeppelin, for which he received the Distinguished Service Cross.

In August 1918 he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for attacking two airships in bad weather and reputedly bringing down the last Zeppelin to attack Britain.

↑ Egbert (Bertie) Cadbury, Bournville Works Magazine, November 1915. Reproduced with the permission of the Cadbury Archive, Mondelēz International.

The Politics of Compulsion

By late 1915 the British government faced a 'manpower crisis'. While Quakers and others tried to stop compulsory service, on 2 March 1916 the first Military Service Act came into force. With some concessions, single men between 18 and 41 were ordered to join the military. Eventually, conscription included able-bodied men between 18 and 51.

In October 1915, a group of MPs - Quakers and others - met to set out why they were opposed to conscription. While some of their arguments were pragmatic, others were economic, political, moral and religious, including the fundamental principle against killing.

In November 1915, conscription was discussed at the highest levels of the wartime Coalition Government. Prime Minister Herbert Asquith promised that conscription would not be introduced unless there was national consensus.

Despite a lack of public approval, and dissent within the Government, resulting in the resignation of the Home Secretary, in January 1916 Asquith introduced the Military Service Bill.

While Parliamentary support was overwhelming, opponents of the Bill forced amendments before it became law. Most significantly, Quaker MPs T. Edmund Harvey and Arnold S. Rowntree secured that *'exemption on conscience grounds, may take the form of an exemption from combatant service only, or may be conditional on the applicant being engaged in some work which ... is of national importance'*.

Assessing Exemption

The Government established a tribunal system to hear the cases of those who believed they should not be conscripted. These included Quakers who refused to fight, or aid 'the war effort'.

Legislation permitted exemption from combatant, but not from military service. Local tribunals decided who could be exempted from conscription. Few men were granted 'absolute exemption'. Most were given exemption on the condition that they undertook what was considered 'work of national importance'. Appeal tribunals were also in place. A central tribunal considered exceptional cases.

Tribunal committees were made up of important local people. Some included Quakers. Birmingham Alderman John Henry Lloyd, for example, was one of Warwickshire's eighteen-strong Appeal Tribunal. Even so, there was only so much sympathetic members could do.

For example, Leslie Richardson, a Quaker Meeting attender, reported that his 1918 Warwickshire Appeal Tribunal *'wondered whether one so young knew what was right better than they, and asked who I obeyed. I replied that I obeyed conscience.'*

Not believing that someone who had recently left school was able to think for himself, the committee dismissed his appeal.

If conditional exemption was granted, men could be ordered to join the Royal Army Medical Corps or the Army's Non-Combatant Corps (NCC), established in 1916. NCC members were not supposed to handle weapons or munitions, but laboured to support troops. However, sometimes they were expected to handle ammunition or build rifle ranges. Refusing could result in Field Punishment No. 1, also known as 'crucifixion', for up to 80 days.

Other conscientious objectors (COs) were directed towards 'work of national importance'. In 1916, Herefordshire Quaker Eric P. Southall, for instance, an apprentice chartered accountant, was asked if he would serve in the Friends' Ambulance Unit or Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee. He replied: *'I am doing better peace work now by remaining in England, and ... probably saving more lives than I possibly could by serving with one of the Friends' Units.'*

Work of National Importance

Those who objected to conscription but were willing to do 'work of national importance' were referred to the 'Pelham Committee' or the Friends' Ambulance Unit's General Service Section (GSS). Men given placements through these schemes often found themselves in unfamiliar and uncomfortable situations.

The Government's Pelham Committee listed civilian jobs of national importance and sought employers, mostly for non-Quaker conscientious objectors. Quaker MPT. Edmund Harvey was a Committee member and helped advise tribunals.

The Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU) was a voluntary and unofficial Quaker body, active in healthcare on the Western Front since November 1914. In 1916 it established a 'General Service Section' (GSS) and used its Government connections to arrange work placements, mainly for Quaker conscientious objectors.

The Pelham Committee organised work in forestry, food production, transport, mining, education and public utilities. GSS placements included the FAU, abroad or in their British hospitals (such as Uffculme, a Cadbury-donated Birmingham premises). Those unwilling to have

contact with the army could work in welfare and mental health. Agriculture was the main 'alternative service' of both Pelham and the GSS.

Through the GSS, Harold Holttum (an educated Cambridgeshire-born farmhand and former attender at Bull Street, Birmingham) worked as an agricultural labourer on isolated farms, 1916-1918. Unlike many urban and white-collar objectors, Holttum did not need the physical, rural training provided by the FAU, nor was he as lonely or as despised as some COs. However, a shopkeeper near to where he spent nearly two years, refused to serve him; this would have made life difficult in a small place without alternatives.

The Four Lloyd Brothers & Their Different Paths

The outbreak of war caused a crisis for the family of Birmingham Quakers Gertrude and John Henry Lloyd. The couple had four sons, each of whom took a different position on the war.

Their second son Alan Scrivener Lloyd enlisted almost immediately and was given a commission as Temporary Second Lieutenant in the 78th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. Alan was driven by a desire to prove himself. His decision caused tension within the family and great sadness for his parents. Alan was killed on 4 August 1916 at Ypres when his son David was ten months old. He was posthumously awarded the Military Cross.

Ronald and Eric both joined the FAU. After training at Jordans in Buckinghamshire, Ronald departed for Dunkirk on 30 October 1914 and was quickly followed by his brother Eric who left England on 23 December.

Gerald, the eldest brother, took alternative service in Oswestry, Shropshire, working in YMCA huts for soldiers. Family anecdotes related that he was presented with white feathers in the street, a symbol designed to label

people as cowards and shame them into fighting.

Ronald increasingly felt guilty that he was not 'doing his bit' and the introduction of conscription and Alan's death increased his doubts. Eric was also in a quandary and left the FAU to join the Navy. Their parents

were distraught and Gertrude wrote to Ron on 1 December 1916:

'I can see you want dangerous work but oh my Ron can't you find any without joining the Army & going into the Artillery? I must not urge you against your conscience but oh my son do pray over this very very carefully, and please do nothing hastily.'



After much consideration, Ron also left the FAU in December 1917 to enlist in the Royal Field Artillery but

the war ended before he got to fight. Eric, Ronald and Gerald all survived the war and remained Quakers throughout their lives.

The Fellowship of Woodbrooke

A number of men associated with Woodbrooke Quaker Settlement, a Quaker college in Birmingham focussing on religious and social education, were conscientious objectors, including the lecturer A. Barratt Brown, who was imprisoned. Military authorities suspected the Settlement of harbouring absentees. In January 1917, Woodbrooke was raided by the police and seven men were arrested.

Corder Catchpool, William Corrin, Frank Doran, Charles Fish, Bert Hurworth, Stanley Keeling and Richard Porteous were taken to the cells at Steelhouse Lane, Birmingham. On 14 January they wrote a letter to the Woodbrooke warden:

Last evening at nine o'clock after our frugal supper, we had our prayer meeting with you. The thought especially in our minds, for us all, was Christ's promise: "Peace I leave with you – my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." The promise is not alone for you & us, but for all, & especially for those everywhere who suffer & sorrow. We knew you would be thinking of us, & ministering to our need. We felt so strong & happy - (the strength & joy came in part from you) - that we thought perhaps you needed our help too, & the desire was amongst us to

give freely. But we cannot hope to repay when we owe so much. And the simple words of thanks we wish to add are still less adequate.

Woodbrooke faced loss and ignominy and discomfort to help us. You welcomed us to your fellowship taking the risks whilst we had the gain. If you could realise all that it has meant & will mean to us, even to those of us who have been only a few days with you - you would have your reward. We hope to show in days to come what Woodbrooke has been to us - a new vision & a new impulse. To change the figure from conics to astromomics, may the beloved settlement become a glowing heart of International Fellowship, throwing off centres afire with its inspiration to move in ever widening orbits till they encircle the globe.

Wilfrid E. Littleboy

Littleboy's experiences illustrate the complicated and often lengthy nature of tribunal proceedings. He appeared before a tribunal in Birmingham on 17 March 1916. When he rejected the Tribunal's suggestions for alternative work, his case was deferred for a month.

He returned on 14 April and again refused the panel's suggestions of joining the FAU or working in munitions as an accountant, his peace-time occupation. Littleboy claimed an absolute exemption. The Tribunal disagreed as it considered his objection could be met through non-combatant duty in the service of the state.

Littleboy's appeal was heard on 5 June when the Tribunal again attempted to persuade him to take non-combatant, but war-related, work. Littleboy argued that in loyalty to God he could not undertake any form of work, military or civil, connected to the conflict. His appeal was dismissed.

He was arrested and appeared before the magistrates on 1 January 1917. Fined 40 shillings, he was handed over to the military as an absentee. Hugh Gibbins who attended Littleboy's hearing was arrested in court and fined and committed to the military authorities. Both men were taken to Budbrooke Barracks, Warwickshire.

As Gibbins was clerk to Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting, and Littleboy his assistant clerk, the Meeting lost the services of both men on the same day.

On 16 January, Littleboy and Gibbins were court martialled at Budbrooke, sentenced to 112 days hard labour and transferred to Wormwood Scrubs. In his statement to the Court Martial, quoted in *The Friend*, Littleboy said:

'No man, and I am convinced, no nation, can permanently resist the power of persistent unselfish love... Neither the decision of a civil tribunal nor the authority of the army could discharge me from a loyalty I owe to God... I therefore refused to obey a military order, in the firm belief that I was thereby obeying the voice of God within me.'

He was court-martialled again with Gibbins at Weymouth in late April 1917 and sentenced to six months hard labour. In total he was imprisoned for 28 months and was not released until 1919.

Roderic Kendall Clark

Roderic Kendall Clark (1884-1937) was a successful Quaker businessman from Purley, near Croydon, who was prominent in Friends' debates about how to respond to conscription. He worked for the Friends' Service Committee (FSC) and Friends' War Victims' Relief Committee (FWVRC). He was imprisoned between 1917 and 1919.

At first, Clark's local tribunal granted him 'absolute exemption'. In July 1916 this decision was overturned and he then received an exemption '*conditional upon work of national importance*'. While FWVRC was acceptable as such work, they were unable to offer Clark full-time employment in Britain. Clark argued he had a '*definite vocation*' to work with groups thought unacceptable, including the No-Conscription Fellowship and FSC. He was arrested and on 10 January 1917 was court-martialled and imprisoned.

Clark and another Quaker CO, Robert Mennell, fought a legal battle for absolute exemption for reasons of conscience, and against their treatment. On 11 November 1917 the War Minister Lord Derby pledged that successive sentences for conscientious objection to all forms

of service would cease. Clark and Mennell were the first COs to be tried again following Derby's statement, but were still convicted. Clark was finally released in April 1919. His health was forever damaged.

In a letter dated 19 August 1916, Clark wrote:

'I cannot give up trying to do what I can. To the minds of many of us, including many who are not pacifists, as letters I have from men in the army bear witness, they [conscientious objectors under arrest] represent the cause of religious liberty.'

William Wilson - Arguments for the Scriptural Support of Conscientious Objection

William Wilson (1880-1955) was a theology tutor at Woodbrooke during the war years. He was an articulate and passionate advocate for the pacifist cause. As well as his book Christ and War, first published in 1913, but republished in November 1914, Wilson wrote a series of articles for The Friend on the Scriptural basis for the peace testimony.

He argued for the ethical nature of Christ's Messiahship. He also asserted that the Bible's *'have the mind in you that was in Christ Jesus'* suggested putting aside self interest and concentrating on harmony and co-operation with others. Wilson drew out the universal anti-war implications of this transformation of individual character.

Wilson criticised those who claimed that Christ's saying *'Render unto Caesar the things that are due unto Caesar, and to God the things that are due to God'* implied a duty of military service. The state cannot demand of people the things that are due to God. In an article for *Workers at Home and Abroad* in February 1918, Wilson argued that the text was not implying that body, soul, and conscience, could be given over to the state. Moreover, this notion echoed the very ideas Britain claimed to be fighting against.

Germany was seen to hold that the state was all, and the individual nothing. This ideology *'in essence [did] not consist in the supremacy of military force, but in the arbitrary will of the State as paramount over the mind and will of the men and women who form the nation.'*

In effect, the British government would be guilty of exactly this if it imposed military service on those conscientiously opposed to it. This was a vital argument for Wilson, and for absolutist COs like Roderic Kendall Clark, Robert Mennell, Corder Catchpool and others.

Prisons and Work Camps

More than 6,000 conscientious objectors were refused exemption from military service, court martialled, and sent to prison. The standard sentence was 112 days hard labour, beginning with a month in solitary confinement on bread and water. At least 80 COs either died in prison or as a result of imprisonment. Many others became physically or mentally ill and some never recovered.

On release, the CO would again be called up for military service, re-arrested for refusing and court martialled. By the end of the war, some of the 'absolutists', who refused any role related to the war effort, had gone through this process up to six times, and served four or five prison sentences. Altogether, approximately 1,500 COs were absolutists; around 145 of those were Quakers.

As prisons began to fill up with COs, the Government introduced the 'Home Office Scheme', establishing work centres across the country, such as the one at Warwick Prison. Work at the centres was strenuous and difficult and was often punitive rather than useful.

The largest facility under the Scheme was at Princetown Work Camp (formerly Dartmoor Prison), where COs worked long hours on the moor, mainly in agriculture and quarrying. It eventually held over 1,000 'Home

Office' COs. Quakers were particularly active at the camp, helping to provide space and support for the visits of COs' families.

Quaker Elizabeth Fox Howard (1873-1957) was Chaplain at Princetown in 1917 and 1918. After seeing the terrible conditions, and finding the men had become '*apathetic & hopeless*', she felt that '*feeding them and letting them talk*' was vital. A '*delicate boy from Birmingham [for example, was] as white & thin as a ghost ... We gave him an egg ... & his eyes filled with tears & ... He poured out all sorts of ... prison tales*'.

Among other Quaker support, Warwickshire Monthly Meeting organised personal visits to prisons and work camps – William Albright visited Lichfield and Warwick Barracks, Henry Lloyd Wilson visited prisons including Birmingham's Winson Green, and on 27 August 1916 a meeting for worship was held at Winson Green Prison for 23 men.

Lawrence Deller – ‘The Artist of Dartmoor’

Lawrence Deller was born to a Church of England family in Lichfield, Staffordshire, in 1889. He went on to attend Birmingham School of Art. From 1910 he made his living as an artist in London, marrying Frances Isherwood just after war was declared.

In 1916 he appealed his conscription on the grounds that he had ethical and spiritual objections to the taking of human life. His path followed that of many other absolutist COs: tribunal, rejected appeal, order to submit to military service, court martial. He was sentenced to six months hard labour (later shortened) in Wormwood Scrubs, where he first came into contact with Friends.

Eventually, and partly because Quaker MP T. Edmund Harvey raised his case in Parliament, Lawrence’s objection was recognised and he was transported to Princetown Work Camp. Frances took single-room lodging in the village nearby.

Lawrence was there nicknamed ‘The Artist of Dartmoor’. After a long day of sewing mail bags, he painted portraits of his fellow COs and the camp’s visitors. Sophia Sturge, the Birmingham-based Quaker and social reformer, set up the ‘Lord’s Café’ in Princetown, where COs and their families could meet. Lawrence was commissioned by the grateful

inmates to paint her portrait, which included, at her request, Dartmoor Prison and a dove with an olive-branch in its beak. (This portrait is owned by Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, though is not on display.) Elizabeth Fox Howard, another Quaker and Princetown Camp Chaplain, also had her portrait painted; *‘I don’t like it much at present, but he is going to finish it this afternoon, and he feels satisfied with it, so I suppose I really am rather a dreary, yellow middle-aged spinster...!’*

In 1917, subject to certain stipulations, Lawrence was allowed to return home to London. In May 1918 he and Frances had a daughter, Ursula. Weakened by his time at Wormwood Scrubs and Princetown, Lawrence died from bronchial problems associated with Spanish Influenza just seven days after the Armistice. Paradoxically, perhaps even tragically, the battalion to which he had been assigned in 1916 (6th London Rifles) never saw combat, and never even went abroad.

Women's Activism and Support for COs

Quaker women endeavoured to support men faced with conscription. At the Warwickshire North Women's Meeting of 8 February 1916, for example, Mabel Barlow led a discussion on the responsibilities of women Friends with regard to conscription. She spoke of the danger that conscription would become a permanent feature of national life resulting in the 'undermining of conscience', and urged women Friends to co-operate with others to avert this 'catastrophe'.

In her address to the same Meeting, Marion Martin suggested spiritual and practical ways in which women could intervene. These included providing '*spiritual motherhood*' and support through prayer, self-discipline and knowledge about what was happening, attending tribunals, working for the repeal of the Military Service Act, and exerting personal influence. Martin concluded by reminding the Meeting that above all '*we stand for the freedom of the Children of God.*'

These local discussions were similar in tone to the statement produced by a group of Quaker women at a major September 1914 conference in Llandudno, where Friends gathered to develop a collective response to the crisis. In the proceedings, later published as *Friends and the War*, the assembled women

appealed to female Friends to use their participation in women's organisations, clubs and adult schools to educate for peace and '*to give our message with effect.*'

In Warwickshire North several women Friends – including Mabel Barlow, Eileen Barratt Brown, Theodora M. Wilson and Marian Priestman – participated in the work of the Monthly Meeting Committees which supported COs. They provided advice and advocacy through writing letters.

Women Friends in other parts of the country engaged in similar support work. Mary Snowden Braithwaite moved from Woodbrooke, where she and her husband Isaac had been wardens, to Kendal in July 1914. She attended tribunals in the Kendal area, held study circles at their home in Ghyll Close, and visited COs in prison.

Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting & Enlisted Friends

Warwickshire North Monthly Meeting was very concerned about 'the extreme pressure' on young men to enlist. Several had joined the military soon after war began. Some recruits were from prominent local families, including the Barrows, Cadburys, Gibbins, Impeys, Lloyds and Southalls.

In response, the Monthly Meeting appointed an Enlistment Committee. Although the Committee wished *'to act towards the enlisters in a spirit of tenderness and sympathy'*, the objection to military service was reiterated.

The Committee maintained a record of members who had enlisted or supported military action in some other way, such as making munitions. It kept in touch with each man and considered resignations of membership.

In February 1919, the Committee reported a total 56 members had enlisted, ten of whom were in medical or non-combatant services. Eight had been killed in action, one died of disease, four were wounded and one was a prisoner of war in Germany. Although it believed that war was contrary to the spirit of Christ, the Meeting decided to take no

disciplinary action against those who enlisted and assured them that they would be welcomed back.

This spirit of reconciliation was reflected in a letter sent at Christmas 1918 to members who had entered the armed services or were engaged in relief, ambulance, agricultural or other 'work of national importance'. Reflecting on the lessons learnt during the previous four years, the Clerk, John Henry Barlow, expressed the Meeting's hopes for the future:

'For you especially, many of whom have seen the working out of the dreadful tragedy at close quarters, these years must have fundamentally affected your outlook on life, and in your estimate of its value. We believe that many of you will return home with the ardent wish to apply all your powers to the task of building a new and better world on the ruins of the old. The future is yours.'

Legacies of Conscription and Conscience

Overstretched and exhausted in the final months of the conflict, Germany accepted defeat. An Armistice was agreed. The guns fell silent at 11 o'clock on the 11 November 1918. But that was not the end of the war; its ramifications continued.

The process of demobilisation began. 'Work of national importance' placements ceased. The Friends' Ambulance Unit (FAU) was disbanded in early 1919. For imprisoned conscientious objectors, matters were less straightforward. The Government were reluctant to release them until servicemen were demobbed, claiming they would take jobs from returning soldiers. Despite campaigning by Quakers and others for their release, the last COs were not freed until August 1919. Thereafter, they found it extremely difficult to find employment and were denied the right to vote.

However, their experiences ensured that great leaps in prison reform and human rights were made. At the end of the war, Quakers Cecil Leeson and Margery Fry (both with connections to Birmingham) were the central figures in the Howard League for Penal Reform. Prominent conscientious objectors Fenner Brockway (founder of the No-Conscription Fellowship) and Quaker Stephen Hobhouse interviewed their formerly-imprisoned comrades, and published their report as *English Prisons*

To-Day in 1922. Pressure from other quarters, including London Yearly Meeting, ensured some reform of the prison system.

Despite efforts to the contrary, a second world war began in 1939. The FAU was quickly re-formed to address anticipated medical and humanitarian need. Individuals who had been in the Unit during the First World War, including Birmingham Quaker Paul Cadbury, instigated and directed these new efforts.

The First World War and the 'conscience clause' in conscription legislation set precedents for the Second World War. This not only meant that conscientious objectors - now men and women - could legally reject the war, but also that they were treated more humanely by the State. While arrangements were often individualised, many still faced everyday hostility and some were sent to prison. Recent research has established there were over 17,000 conscientious objectors in the First World War; in the Second, that there were officially around 61,000.

Quakers & the First World War

LIVES & LEGACIES

Further Reading

- David Boulton, *Objection Overruled: Conscription and Conscience in the First World War* (1967; 2014).
- Pink Dandelion and Rebecca Wynter (eds), special issue on Quaker responses to the First World War, *Quaker Studies* (December 2016).
- Will Ellsworth-Jones, *We Will Not Fight... The Untold Story of World War One's Conscientious Objectors* (2008).
- John William Graham, *Conscription and Conscience: A History 1916-1919* (1922) <https://archive.org/details/conscriptioncons00grahrich>.
- Thomas C. Kennedy, *The Hound of Conscience: a History of the No-Conscription Fellowship, 1914-1919* (1981).
- Cyril Pearce, *Comrades in Conscience: The Story of an English Community's Opposition to the Great War* (2001; 2014).

You can listen to Harold Holttum and Wilfrid Littleboy's interviews through the Imperial War Museum's website: <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80010237> and <http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80000482>.

You can also search online for the details of over 17,000 conscientious objectors, compiled and donated by Cyril Pearce, through the Museum's 'Lives of the First World War' database (<https://livesofthefirstworldwar.org/>).

Several collections held by Birmingham Archives & Collections in the Library of Birmingham were used to research this booklet including Arthur Impey's diary (transcript available online at <http://www.hellfirecorner.co.uk/tucker/tuckerbiography.htm>), the Lloyd and Cadbury family papers, and the archives of Central England Quakers.

The Friend is a valuable source for tribunal reports and correspondence. Copies are held at The Library of the Religious Society of Friends in London and Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre in Birmingham.

Acknowledgements

Authors

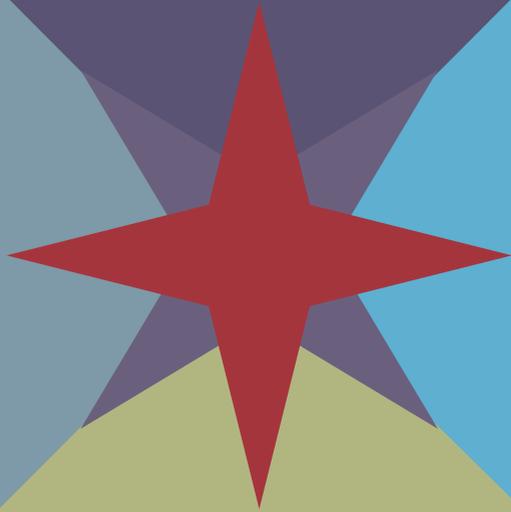
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