

WORDS OF PEACE

The legacy of peace in Birmingham
during and after World War One

KS3

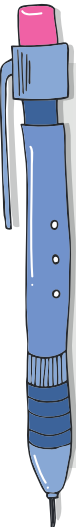




At the start of World War One many people living in Birmingham were excited about the prospect of going to war. Many thought that it would be an exciting adventure that would be over by Christmas, after a swift victory against the Germans. Men and boys were keen to sign up, with some boys lying about their age so that they could be enrolled into the army, as they feared they would 'miss out'.

However there were plenty of people who did not believe going to war was the right decision, whether for religious, moral or practical reasons.

Can you think of 5 reasons why people might not have wanted to fight during World War One?



- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5



Conscientious objectors

Conscientious objectors were men who refused to fight in the war due to personal or religious beliefs. They could be split into two categories – those who refused to take part in anything related to the war (**absolutists**) and those who agreed to do work which did not directly involve killing people.

Oliver Banwell

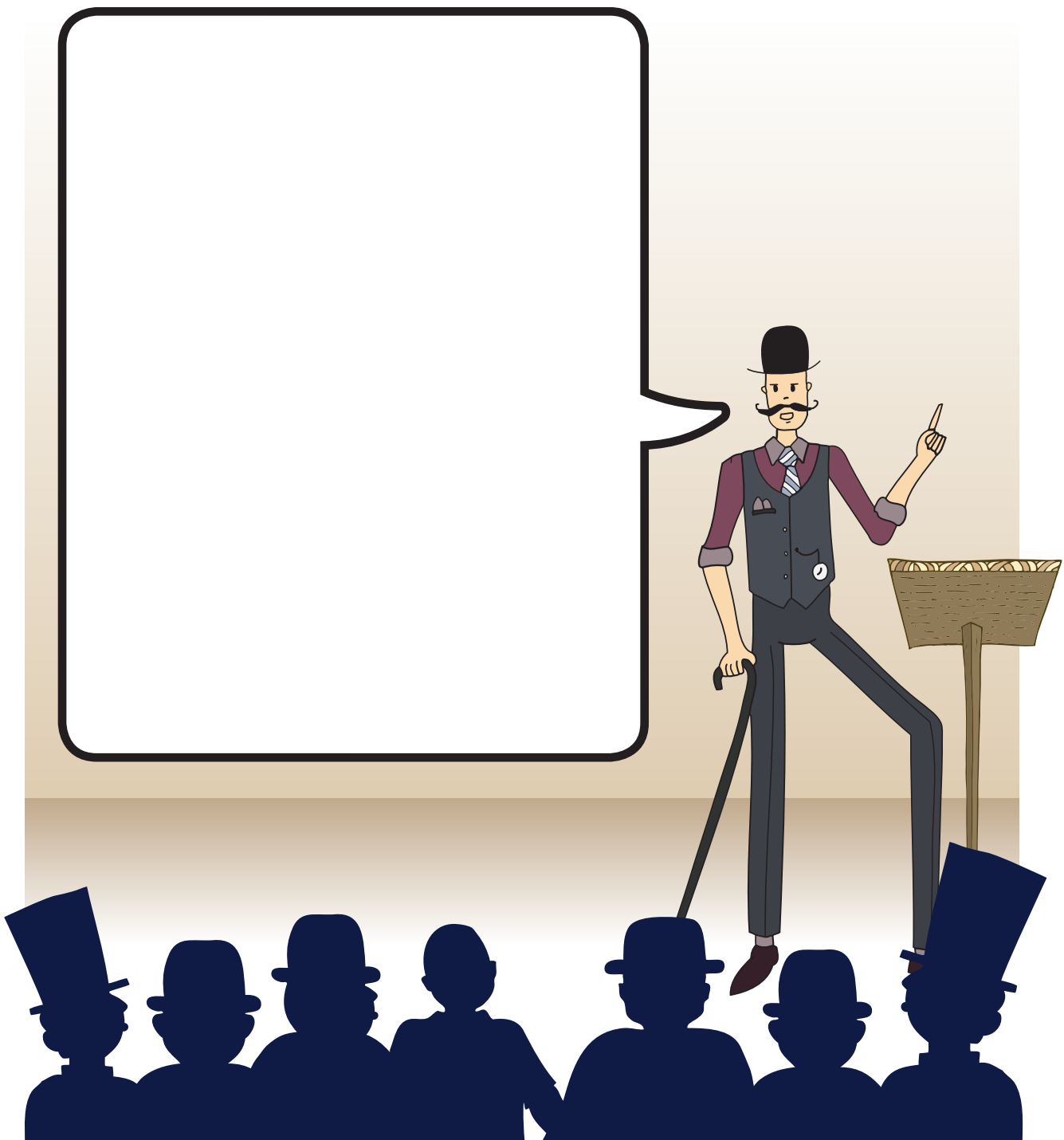
- ◆ Before the war he was a junior teacher at Stirchley School in Birmingham and a keen photographer
- ◆ Although he was not religious, his mother was, and she wrote frequently to him letters about God.
- ◆ He became a conscientious objector when he was conscripted in 1916 and was sent to a tribunal at Wormwood Scrubs Prison
- ◆ His tribunal was successful and between November 1916 and May 1918 he performed alternative service at Chiseldon Camp, Wiltshire.
- ◆ In April 1918, Oliver was ordered to work on a rifle range which soldiers used for firing practice. He refused and was charged with disobeying an order and placed in the 'guard room'.
- ◆ The charge was dismissed but when he refused a second order to work on the rifle range he was court martialled and was sentenced to two years hard labour and imprisonment in Winchester Prison where he remained until June 1919.
- ◆ After the war Oliver's sympathetic head teacher allowed him to return to teaching at Stirchley School in September 1919.



Memorial to Chiseldon Camp

These objectors would sometimes gather in public places and recite speeches and protests explaining why they did not want to fight. William Holliday held regular anti-war meetings in the Bull Ring every week from the start of the conflict. He was known as 'Bull Ring Billy'.

**Imagine you are Bull Ring Billy.
Write a short speech below about why you
don't want to go to war then perform it in
front of the class.**



Men who refused to fight were usually summoned to a tribunal, where the government would decide what to do with the objectors. Usually alternative jobs were offered that did not directly involve killing, such as ambulance drivers, doctors or manufacturing. If the individual refused the work then they were usually sent to a hard labour camp or imprisoned.

Would you have rather done the alternative work or go to a hard labour camp? Why?

Some conscientious objectors used art and media to express their views and opinions. Joseph Southall, a local Quaker, did several anti-war drawings which were published in periodicals, polemical books and his pamphlet *Fables and Illustrations* and *The Ghosts of the Slain* where he provided the illustrations for a text written by R.L. Outhwaite.

Draw your own anti-war illustration in the space below or on a separate piece of paper.

Joseph Southall's,
Ghosts of the Slain
© Library of
Birmingham



Tips

Think about what message you are trying to send.

Are you saying fighting is wrong or peace is the better option?

Who is your intended audience?

Are you protesting against a historic war, or a current one?

In Birmingham there were many Quakers who objected to the war for religious reasons. Although many young Quaker men were conscientious objectors they were not all pacifists.

Some Quakers supported the war and one third of Quaker men of military age served in the armed services including Bertie (Egbert) Cadbury who was a pilot in the Royal Flying Corps.

1. Get into groups of three and allocate each person one of the following roles:

- a. Egbert Cadbury
(A young Quaker)
- b. Elizabeth Cadbury
(Egbert's Quaker mother)
- c. John Smith
(Egbert's friend who has already enlisted for war service)

2. As a group, create a short scene where Egbert is telling his mother that he has decided that he wants to enlist with his friend. Think about the following possible conflicts and emotions the characters may be experiencing:

- a) The concern Elizabeth will have about her son dying
- b) The guilt Egbert would feel if he stayed safe when his friends were fighting
- c) John's reasons for thinking the war is important
- d) The conflict between Egbert's upbringing and desire to fight
- e) Elizabeth's religious beliefs about killing
- f) John's excitement about war



Many Quakers decided to manifest peace through practical actions. William Albright and Henry Lloyd Wilson, both Quakers, provided advice and advocacy to conscientious objectors, wrote letters, and visited absolutists in prisons and work camps. They assisted the families of local German, Austrian and Hungarian born men who were arrested and interned as 'enemy aliens' leaving their British families destitute. Assistance took the form of giving money, gifts and work to the families.

Quakers were also very active in helping Belgian and other refugees in Birmingham and the surrounding area. Evelyn Sturge and Dr. Mary Sturge worked for a refugee committee providing accommodation and work for the refugee families. Along with Geraldine Cadbury they also ran a Belgian school, the Birmingham Ecole Belge.

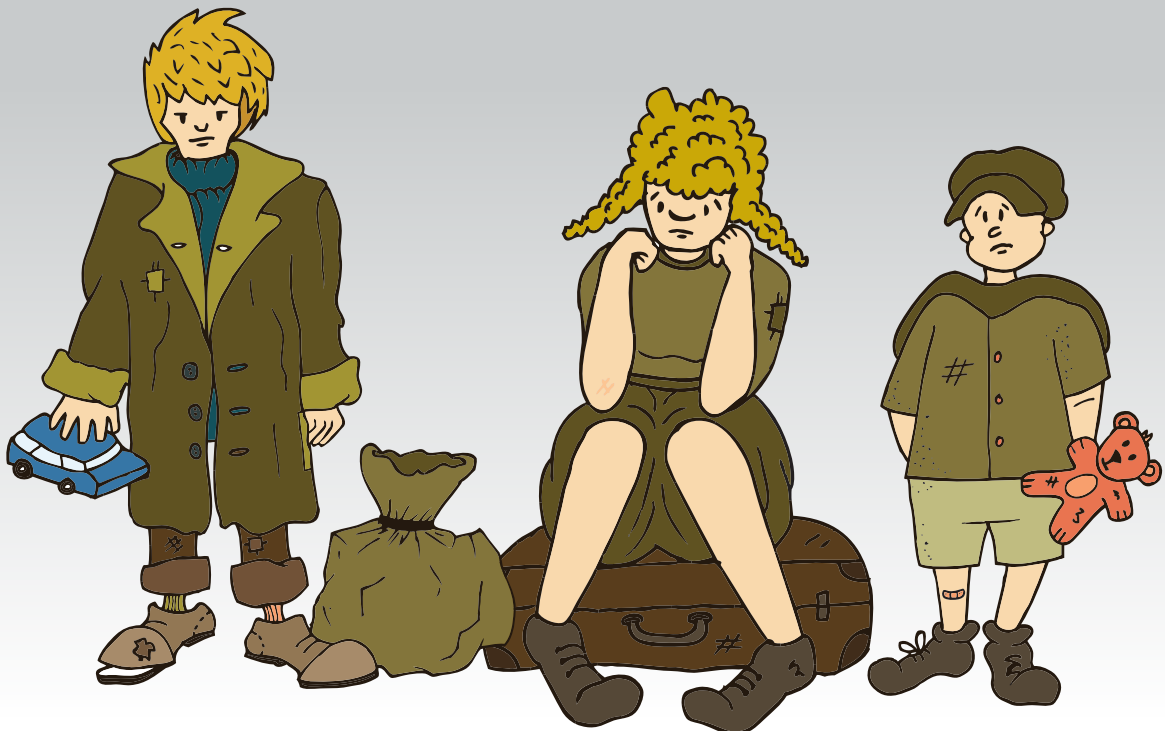


Did you know

The Quakers' pacifist views meant that they came under suspicion by the authorities.

On 6th November 1916, the police visited the homes of four local Quaker magistrates and presented them with a list of ten questions to test their loyalty.

They also asked to inspect their cheque books to see whether they had donated money to anti-conscription organisations.





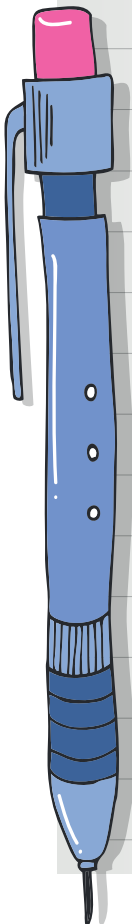
Imagine you are Geraldine Cadbury and you are writing to the government for financial aid to create a school for Belgian refugees.

What might it say? Think about the following:

- ◆ **Why might the government be reluctant to help?**
- ◆ **Should you write a plea based on logic or emotions? Which might get a better response?**
- ◆ **Why do you think it is important to help?**



A large rectangular area with horizontal lines for writing, intended for a letter.





During the war there were many women who also campaigned for peace as well as war, which split the national suffragist movement. A pacifist group helped organise the controversial Women's Peace Congress held at The Hague, where 1,200 women from 12 countries met between 28th April – 1st May 1915. The Women's International League (WIL), renamed in 1919 as The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was formed as a result of this congress.

The congress argued that international disputes should be settled by negotiation and arbitration rather than by war. It was very controversial and the women were attacked in the press as foolish, unpatriotic and pro-German.

A local committee of the WIL was formed in Birmingham in early 1915 and the local branch had 117 members by October 1916. The WIL organised women's peace meetings in Birmingham during the war. On Christmas Eve 1916 a peace meeting was held in the Bull Ring when a procession of women walked from a prayer meeting in the Priory Rooms, Bull Street.

On 29th July 1917 another peace meeting was held in the Bull Ring as part of the national Women's Peace Crusade. By this period the local branch of WIL had about 254 members. The local press reported that a crowd of about 300 assembled in Old Square and marched to the Bull Ring.

In groups of 3 or 4, imagine you are forming the Birmingham branch of the WILPF. Together can you create the following;

- **A logo**
- **A slogan**
- **A campaign poster**
- **A speech to address the public.**





After WW1 many people expressed the horrors of war and need for peace through creative writing.

With censorship restrictions lifted, poets such as Rudyard Kipling, Siegfried Sassoon and Edgell Rickwood all wrote moving poems. Others, namely

Nobel Prize winner Romain Rolland, wrote an international peace manifesto called 'Declaration of the Independence of the Spirit' in 1919. Rolland's manifesto appealed to people to pause for thought after one of the most violent periods in history and to consider a collective way forward to foster future world peace. This declaration was supported by many leading figures, including the renowned Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore.

In the leaf below, can you write your own peace manifesto which supports international collaboration and calls for peace?





Other artists use music, dance and drama to express concepts about peace and war.

In groups of three or four can you create a two minute dance piece which is inspired by ideas of war and peace? Think about the following:

- ◆ What symbols and movements do you associate with war and peace?
- ◆ How can you use your face to express emotions?
- ◆ How might speed and fluidity of movement add to your performance?
- ◆ Are you portraying modern or historical wars?
- ◆ What other symbols or associations does the word peace hold?

Links

Words of Peace blog:
<http://sampadwordsofpeace.wordpress.com>

Sampad
www.sampad.org.uk

National Portrait Gallery
www.npg.org.uk/

Birmingham Archives
www.libraryofbirmingham.com/archives

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