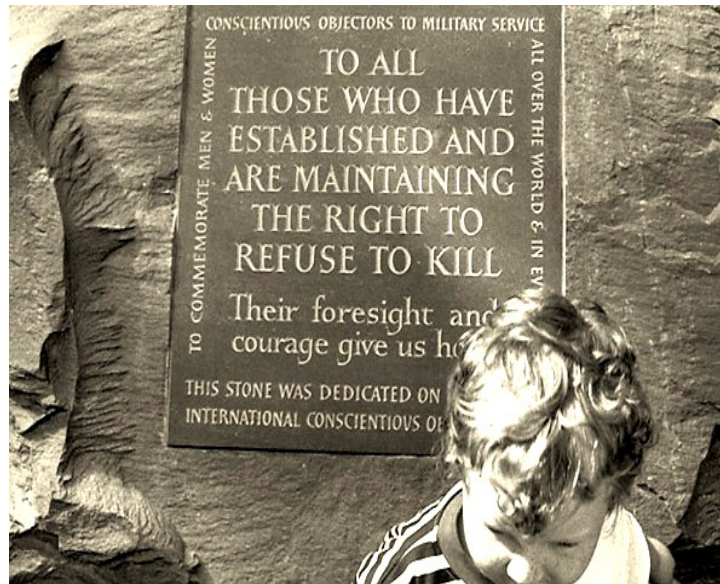


# Quaker belief in action

conscientious objectors  
in the First and Second World Wars



Editors  
Sue Smith and Marieke Faber Clarke

“We totally oppose all wars, all preparation for war, all use of weapons and coercion by force, and all military alliances: no end could ever justify such means. We equally and actively oppose all that leads to violence among people and nations, and violence to other species and to our planet. Refusal to fight with weapons is not surrender. We are not passive when threatened by the greedy, the cruel, the tyrant, the unjust.”

**Quaker Faith and Practice 24.10**

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## **Introduction**

### **Why these stories now?**

This booklet tells the stories of conscientious objectors to the First and Second World Wars, as remembered by members of Oxford Quaker Meeting. Most of the stories are based on contributions at a Friday with Friends event at Oxford Meeting House in May 2014. Inspired by my own father's story (Stephen Lee) and angered by what I feel to be the official rewriting of history for the centenary of the First World War, I wanted to record for the future how local Quakers remember those relatives, and the impact it had on their own lives and families.

The history of this radical resistance to state enforcement of war is now almost beyond living memory. I hope it will help those who did not live through these wars or remember them, to understand the history of the clash of individual religious conscience with the nation state and its laws.

This is history, but is also about the impact of choices made in the past, on people living today. Conscientious objectors refused to be conscripted into the armed forces, and that stand of personal belief and conviction affected their family and friends. For some families, the balance of greater poverty and sacrifice outweighed the inspiration of a relative who stood up for what they believed in. We find such a balance in the stories collected here.

### **What is a conscientious objector?**

A conscientious objector refuses to be called up into the army to fight, on grounds of objection in conscience to war and fighting. During the First and Second World Wars there were many reasons for this objection –religious, moral and political. And that objection could be absolute, meaning no co-operation whatever with the military system, or relative, meaning accepting of some form of service, such as medical or ambulance work, which did not involve a combat role.

Quakers are well known for their objection to war. Following their Peace Testimony (1660) which declares opposition to ‘all outward wars and fighting’, many Quakers refused to bear arms in the World Wars because they believed that there is something of God or the divine in each person, and therefore harming or killing that person harms all of us/all of creation. However, there were other religious denominations, and political organisations, who opposed war. The range of motivations is expressed in the first manifesto of the No Conscription Fellowship, which was set up to support conscientious objectors in 1915.

“We have been brought to this standpoint by many ways. Some of us have reached it through the Christian faith... others have found it by association with international movements. We believe in the solidarity of the human race and we cannot betray the ties of brotherhood which bind us to one another through the nations of the world.”

### **When was military conscription introduced in Britain?**

Before the First World War, all soldiers were volunteers, or mercenaries. The first Military Service Act was introduced in January 1916. This Act made it a legal obligation on the population to join the armed forces. After February 1916 all unmarried (or widowed) men between 18 and 41 were deemed to be soldiers. The call up was later extended to all married men, and men up to 51. The 1915 Military Service Act included exemptions, for the medically unfit, clergymen, teachers and certain classes of industrial worker in vital industries.

After pressure from peace activists, supported by a small group of MPs, exemption was also written into the Act for grounds of conscience. 'Exemption could be absolute, conditional, or temporary, and might take the form of exemption from combatant service only, or might be conditional on the applicant being engaged on some work, which in the opinion of the Tribunal dealing with the case, is of national importance.' The ambiguity in this clause created an inconsistency of treatment which was a major problem in the First World War.

Between 1916 and 1918, around 16,000 men refused to fight on grounds of conscience. It is difficult to know how many more were intimidated or bullied into acceptance of military service. The Military Service Act was renewed in 1939. It included women, between 20 and 30, without dependent children. There were about 61,000 objectors in the Second World War.

### **How did the state deal with conscientious objectors?**

Conscientious objectors had to appear before Tribunals in their local area and explain their objection to military service. In the First World War most Tribunals consisted of local political appointees, clergy, and an army officer – none of whom received any training, and most of whom had no understanding of and little sympathy with objectors. The Tribunal members had to decide whether to allow the application for conscientious objection. The vast majority of applications were refused. Treatment of many objectors was harsh and punitive. Most, under pressure, and sometimes violence and bullying, accepted non-combatant or alternative service, but the minority who refused to cooperate with the war effort in any way were arrested, court martialled for disobeying orders, imprisoned, or sent to hard labour camps. The conditions were often appalling and treatment was abusive. Some men were charged with desertion and even shot.

By the Second World War in 1939-45, the treatment of COs was not so extreme. Women had to be represented on the Tribunals, as did the trade unions, and there was no army representative. Tribunal members were more likely to understand and accept that some people would refuse to fight. A much smaller proportion of cases was dismissed, and efforts were made to find suitable employment even for the absolutists. The bad experiences of many First World War conscientious objectors were much less common in the Second.



**What was the experience of the objectors and their families?** The stories in this booklet express the range of experiences of employment, health, housing, and social support. A number of the stories give details of how objectors lost their jobs and homes, and found it difficult to find employment of any kind. In the First World War, conscientious objectors were not released from prison until 1919, by which time most jobs had been taken. Especially in the First World War, many conscientious objectors became physically or mentally ill, and some never fully recovered their health. Some conscientious objectors experienced isolation and discrimination from other people those who regarded them as slackers and cowards. Some families had to cope with social exclusion, and lost friends.

**How did Quakers help?**

Most of the testimonies in this booklet bear witness to practical Quaker support given to conscientious objectors and their families. Nationally, Quakers kept records of the objectors, their Tribunal judgments, the work they were given, and the prisons where they were taken. They collaborated with the No Conscription Fellowship, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and other organisations concerned with the welfare and support of objectors. Local Quakers appeared at Tribunals to vouch for the sincerity of objectors known to them. Some Quakers found jobs for the conscientious objectors.

Other Quakers helped with housing. Quakers kept an eye on the welfare of families. They gave money when it was needed. And they provided alternative jobs in relief and ambulance work. Quakers also supported interned ‘enemy aliens’, offering them friendship and meals, finding them homes and jobs.

The First World War saw the creation of two organisations to channel the energy and commitment of the objectors into alternatives to war service. The War Victims Relief Committee rebuilt bombed villages and worked in emergency hospitals all over Europe. In the First World War, the Friends Ambulance Unit did medical volunteer work at the front and on ships and ports in the English Channel. The Friends Ambulance Unit was revived in the Second World War for relief and humanitarian work in many countries that saw fighting and refugees displaced by war, in Europe and more widely – China, India, and North Africa.

**Sue Smith**

### **Acknowledgements**

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Harry George Smith

**Harry George Smith** was born in Rushden, Lancashire. He was a grocer's assistant and provisions clerk. His father was blacklisted as a trade union activist, and couldn't get a job in Britain. He had to go to Canada to find work, and as the eldest son, Harry had to support the rest of the family. Harry, like his father, was a trade unionist, a member of the Independent Labour Party, and a member of the No Conscription Fellowship.

As an 'absolutist' objector (see Introduction) he would do nothing to comply with the authorities regarding the war machine. When compulsory conscription was introduced in 1916, he waited to be arrested for not joining the armed forces. Harry was arrested in September 1916, charged as an absentee under the Military Service Act, and sent to Budbrooke Barracks in Warwick. He was court martialled and sent for 112 days hard labour to Wormwood Scrubs prison.

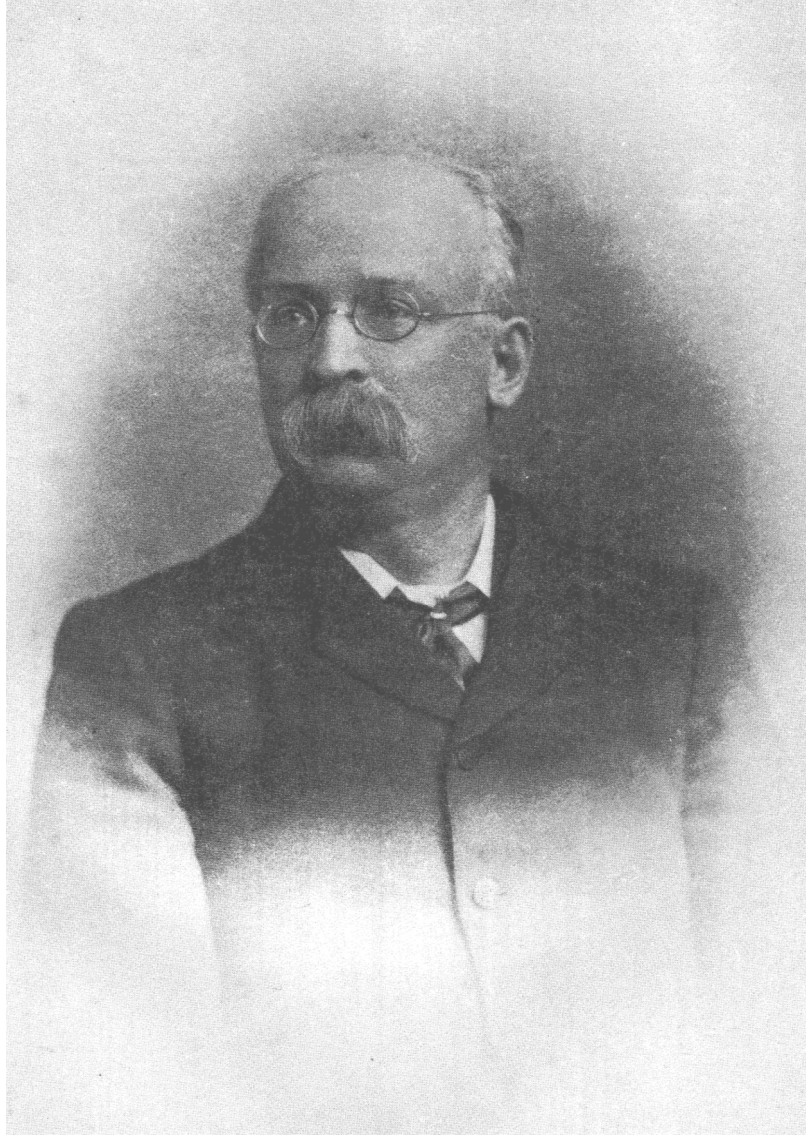
Harry, along with many other absolutist objectors, was the victim of the 'cat and mouse game' played by the authorities to wear down the spirit and determination of conscientious objectors. They would be sentenced, serve their sentence, be released, and then re-arrested again immediately, and the whole process would start over again. Harry Smith was sentenced five times between 1916 and 1919. He was moved repeatedly – Wormwood Scrubs to Parkhurst, Portsmouth, Wandsworth and finally Wakefield

Each time, like many other ‘absolutists’, he was sentenced to a period of hard labour. Sometimes the absolutists were put in solitary confinement, forbidden to talk to each other, and given very little food. Harry was not in a good state of health on his release from prison in 1919. Harry was one of the 120 objectors involved in what was known as the Wakefield Experiment. The authorities wanted to find a way to make objectors less troublesome, and forced them to take sedatives. However, this treatment had little effect on their commitment to resist, and was abandoned after three weeks.

Harry believed that that the war was being decided by the political class while working men in every country bore the brunt of the conflict. While in prison he met other objectors, including Quakers, who influenced his opinions a great deal. He also studied in the Workers Educational Association, played high-level chess, and led rambles. He has been described as ‘green before his time’. After the war he married a Quaker, and became a convinced vegetarian, a teetotaler, a ‘food reformer’ and a manager of health food shops.

*Story told by Malcolm Parlett. Malcolm was Harry Smith’s fifth child, born out of wedlock and adopted by Reg Parlett, his mother’s husband. Malcolm knew nothing of his real parentage until he was 50. He discovered he had two half-sisters and two other half-siblings who had died in childhood.*

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Ebenezer Howard  
Photograph: Hertfordshire County Library



My great-grandfather **Ebenezer Howard** (1850-1928), known to all who knew him as 'Ben', a Londoner whose parents owned two sweet shops in the city, was a social reformer who worked all his adult life to create what we might now call 'sustainable communities': co-operative, equitable and green. Ebenezer's aspiration was to rid Britain's cities of their slums. The answer was to be a 'joyous union of town and country', small, beautiful cities which offered a good healthy life and work for all their citizens. He theorised, designed and brought into being two new cities, Letchworth and Welwyn, as well as many smaller co-operative 'garden' villages across the country. He inspired burgeoning settlements across the world.

They were nearly, but not quite true to his original vision – inevitably compromised by the politics involved in raising money and negotiating shared land ownership. He raised vast sums of money while his own family endlessly scratched around to survive.

Ebenezer Howard is less well known for his work on peace. Yet the book in which he set out his ideal community, practical plans and technical design specifications, was called 'Tomorrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform'. Its ambition reached beyond better housing and working conditions for thousands of city slum dwellers. He wanted to bring about a more harmonious, co-operative and peaceful way of living for all social classes, living together in harmony. It is a visionary book, and highly relevant to our 'housing crisis' today.

The First World War broke out nearly 10 years after Letchworth Garden City was founded. From the start it had attracted many Quakers and other pacifists. It was well known for its diverse faith groups and its vegetarians, teetotallers and sandal-wearing new lifers, theosophists, free thinkers and socialists. Howard was acutely distressed at the declaration of war: 'for years I have been a peace-at-any-price man who in theory would suffer any injustice rather than resort to violence.' He had always abhorred 'class war' at least as much as wars between nations. For him, peaceful means were key to resolving all differences and promoting equality. He was a Congregationalist; an attender at Howgills (Letchworth's Quaker Meeting House); a co-operator; a spiritualist; and a Labour man who also supported the Liberals. He later became a member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP), which had staunchly opposed war. But in 1914, he was deeply disappointed when the Letchworth ILP branch, at a meeting on the first day war was declared, failed to carry a resolution against Britain's entry. Reluctantly, he supported the majority, but within two weeks he was making plans for dropping leaflets over Germany calling for peace.

Howard made several interventions for peace. In the feverish first days of hostilities, an attempt was made to ban pacifist speakers from Letchworth's public meeting place – Howard Hall, 'Pacifists and unpatriotic forces in various garbs and under many pretexts exist in our midst' and were not to be tolerated by the Hall's Committee.

Undoubtedly, there would have been a ready audience and pacifist speakers among the first generation of people living in Letchworth Garden City: a testimonial on behalf of Frederic Osborn, a prominent Letchworth conscientious objector, was signed by 20 fellow citizens. Ebenezer stood firm, and told the Committee that he would withdraw his name unless they backed down. His name was to be reckoned with. And he continued to support Osborn openly after his flight from Letchworth to escape the pursuing authorities.

Despite Howard's initial acceptance of the government's decision to go to war, his abhorrence grew rapidly. He aligned himself with a group advocating a negotiated peace. In mid-August 1914, he drafted a 'Message to the German People,' placing responsibility for the war firmly with their 'despotic rulers'. His message advocated revolution: 'are not your rulers your enemies as well as ours?' They were to 'demand an armistice and a free Constitution..... and then we and you joining hands with all other Nations, will form a Great Peace Army and create a new social order'.

The leaflets with this message were to be dropped by aeroplane: he carefully worked out the technical specifications of the carrier, number of airmen needed, the weight and volume of the paper, and the mileage needed to cover Germany: 1,200,000 messages. He could not resist the idea of joining the flying expedition himself. The friends he consulted, including H.G. Wells, George Cadbury and George Bernard Shaw were all, unsurprisingly, discouraging.

Shaw was a tenacious if tetchy friend for decades, offering practical, financial support peppered with public condescension: he called this ‘a gorgeous notion ... but entirely impracticable for a thousand reasons ... you can do nothing but sit quietly at home and go on with your peaceful work’. I can still see the flimsy typescript, Shaw’s patronizing little note attached to it with a rusty pin: we had the documents at home in my childhood, all now safely in public archives. Howard dropped the idea, but did not accept the counsel to quietism. He lectured round the country, accurately foreseeing revolution in Germany and Russia, followed by an ‘International League of Nations’. He learned, and lectured in Esperanto in the hope of fostering international understanding.

He actively supported Ramsay MacDonald MP in his campaign for a negotiated peace – the two men met when MacDonald gave a lecture in Letchworth. And Howard left the Liberal Party after decades of membership and joined the ILP, once again the sole party of peace. Howard’s wartime actions are the direct part of his peace work. His deepest aspirations for peace lay in his idea of utopias created out of existing circumstances: that is, the urbanising world of the industrial revolution. He did not want to see a violent overthrow to create justice, but to transform here and now how people lived through co-operative ownership, communal cooking, dining, laundry and childcare; work in factories five minutes’ walk from home; small-holdings, gardens and community allotments: a simpler, healthier and more harmonious existence in which the best of town and

country, tradition and modernity, co-operation and individual and modernity, co-operation and individual needs were combined.

Ebenezer died aged 78 worn out, virtually penniless, but beloved. His funeral at Welwyn Garden City was attended by thousands. Despite low social status, limited education, chronic shortage of money, much political opposition, scorn and patronisation, he achieved so much that was - still is - good in the world through his far-sightedness, practical imagination, phenomenal energy, powers of persuasion and a huge capacity for love, friendship and cooperation. And by sticking cheerfully and peaceably to his beliefs and principles: faith in action.

*Story told by Ursula Howard*



Frank Sunderland and family

**Frank Thomas Sunderland** and his wife Lucy (Kate Joyce's grandparents) moved in 1912 from London to Letchworth the new Garden City where they found many kindred spirits with the same pacifist and Socialist ideals, vegetarians, teetotallers and freethinkers. Frank and Lucy were active members of the new Independent Labour Party, politically very aware and concerned to bring equality to society and remove poverty. They attended Howgills Quaker Meeting.

Neither Frank nor Lucy had much formal education beyond elementary school but they were both enthusiastic participants in the active Adult School and the lectures and classes it offered in Letchworth. Frank was a voracious reader. He loved Dickens for the portrayal of all kinds of people. He admired Tolstoy, particularly the political essays, Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Wordsworth, Edward Carpenter and, above all, William Morris.

Frank was called up in 1916 when he was 36 and the children were 9, 7 and 4 years old. He was an absolutist refusing a non-combatant job within the military system and so he was sent to prison, first to Wormwood Scrubs and Wandsworth and then to Bedford where he remained until several months after the war had ended, nearly three years in all. He was released in May 1919 by which time most jobs had been taken by demobilised soldiers. Many employers refused to take on conscientious objectors and many men were cold-shouldered, but Frank was able to continue his carpentry and began picture framing, with the help of George Bernard Shaw who gave him many of his own pictures to frame and sell.

During the three years of imprisonment Frank and Lucy wrote letters to each other. This remarkable correspondence, although strictly controlled in content, length and frequency by the authorities, is a clear testimony to their love and concern for one another. Inspired and sustained by their faith they managed to support each other during this difficult time, with the help of local Quakers and their many sympathetic friends.

Lucy's letters reveal how she looked after the family throughout those years. She grew their fruit and vegetables and kept hens in her own garden; she earned money with her dressmaking skills; collected the weekly dues of two insurance companies and took in lodgers, always finding time to attend lectures and classes at the Adult School, sending resumes to Frank for him to consider and discuss. Frank's letters are full of his ideas and beliefs and references to the books he was reading (commenting that Wandsworth Prison had a good library for its inmates). Friends brought him many books to keep his mind active and he also taught himself Esperanto, dreaming that after the war the family would be able to travel throughout Europe able to communicate with everyone they met. Kate's family are preparing these letters for publication, hoping they will be in print by September 2015.

What happened to Frank Sunderland is a reminder of what many families of conscientious objectors suffered and the difficulties they faced during and after the war.

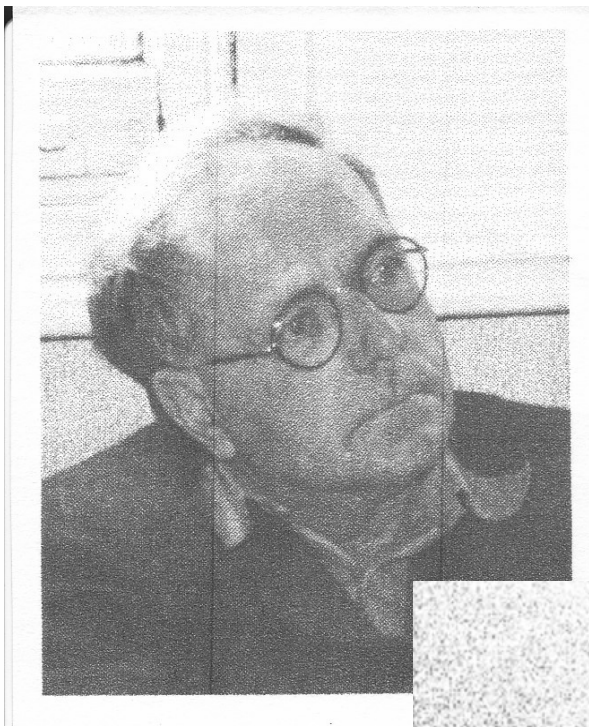
Traumatized by his years in confinement, Frank never again locked his front door.



Dora, the eldest child, (Kate's mother) was not allowed to go to Grammar school because her father had been a 'conscie'. She had to leave school at 14 and could not go on to higher education to fulfil her dream of becoming a teacher. Instead she learned to weave, first on the jacquard looms of Edmund and Alec Hunter's textile mill in Letchworth. Then Frank made her a hand loom of her own and she went on to set up her own weaving business at home, making gloriously coloured material, including altar cloths and vestments for use in churches.

Frank wrote: 'Peace and Love alone are enduring and will ultimately conquer, for they are the forces of construction and, although today in the mad turmoil of war peace and love seem out of place, they are quietly working and will emerge stronger than ever.'

*Story told by Kate Joyce*



Will Warren

Photograph taken from  
“Will Warren: a scrapbook”,  
compiled by John Lampen



Bertram Warren

## **Bertram and Will Warren**

Emlyn Warren's grandfather, and Ingrid Warren's great-grandfather, was Bertram Warren, born into a Baptist family. When the First World War broke out, his opposition to war and his personal pacifism meant he had a difficult choice to make. Although he didn't know anyone else who opposed the war, he decided he could not take any part in it. There were enormous implications. As an industrial chemist he was offered, but turned down, a plum job involved in the production of poison gas.

This was a particularly hard decision, as such a job was seen as of national importance, and would have exempted him from conscription into the armed forces. Because he refused and became a conscientious objector, he was brought before a tribunal and sentenced to prison. He had little support from his religious roots: the Baptist chapel where his family had always worshipped said they 'had no room' for pacifists. Bertram saw an advertisement in the local paper to protest against the war, organised by the Quakers. The family went, and later became Quakers.

In one sense, Bertram was lucky. His professional association protested his imprisonment and he was released from prison, but he lost his job. His contact with Quakers early in the war brought the Warren family help from them. He became a junior manager at Cadbury's, the Birmingham Quaker chocolate factory, and his wife became a cook at the nearby Quaker college, Woodbrooke. They lived in the stables in the Woodbrooke grounds. Emlyn knows no more about his grandfather's feelings and experiences.

A conscientious objector in the family often influences younger members. Bertram's son Will Warren, Emlyn's father, had a pacifist history of his own. Will was born in 1906. He was living in Southend when the First World War broke out. When he was ten, a bomb demolished his bedroom in the family house while he was in another room.

Will was a conscientious objector in the Second World War. He was a fire warden at Queen's College, Oxford, and a porter at the Radcliffe Infirmary. In the 1960s, he was involved in direct action as part of the CND movement to 'ban the bomb'. He was arrested at a sit down protest at Swaffham, Norfolk, against Thor nuclear missiles. A picture of Will being dragged away by police was on the front pages of most newspapers. This was one of the first nonviolent protests against nuclear weapons, and it brought Will two months' imprisonment.

In 1971 he joined a Fellowship of Reconciliation work camp in Derry, Northern Ireland. After his retirement later that year, he went to live in the Bogside, Derry, on the front line of the civil war. His aim was to play a listening role for all sides in the hope that eventually they would listen to each other. He often approached the paramilitaries in order to urge against retaliation. He has been credited with reducing the number of sectarian killings while he was there.

In 1982 Will Warren House was opened as a base in Belfast for community groups and as a memorial to his courage and commitment. His work is recorded in a book about his work in Northern Ireland

(see Further Reading section for details).

*Story told by the Warren family: Emlyn, Jeanne and Ingrid*



Dick and Hilda Reason

My parents **Dick and Hilda Reason** met in Birmingham, probably at Peace Pledge Union meetings. On the outbreak of the Second World War my mother and a colleague (a friend of theirs) were dismissed on the spot because they were COs.

My father as a civil engineer was in a reserved occupation, which means that he could have avoided conscription by staying in the job. Fairly early on during the war, however, he resigned. He and my mother with other CO friends for a time formed a small community in Birmingham, and during that period my father made a living with another man by doing carpentry and other odd jobs.

He appeared before a tribunal, I suppose at the point when he was called up, and did not give religious conviction as the reason for his refusal to fight. Unfortunately we have no record of what he said. The tribunal ordered him to work on the land, but I believe he did not comply until my mother became pregnant – with me – in 1941. He took a job as land drainage officer with Worcestershire County Council.

My parents lived in two or more very unsatisfactory flats or houses during the first few months that he held that job, and my mother was taken seriously ill when I was about 6 months old. Their plight came to the attention of local Quakers

A Quaker farming family let them move into a three bedroomed house at a rent they could afford in a village on the outskirts of Worcester.

My first very happy memories date from there. Once I was old enough to understand, I learned that some kind people called Quakers had let us use that house. Our family and I too had contacts with Quakers from time to time thereafter, though it was not until the 1980s that I first went to a Quaker meeting.

*Story told by Janet Toye*



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**Titia Faber and Richard Clarke:** two young peacemakers who lost almost everything.



Photograph by Daisy Day.

Titia Faber (born 1916) and Richard Clarke (born 1909) met through Christian pacifism. Titia's father Douwe, a pacifist minister in the Netherlands, attended a conference of the International Fellowship of Reconciliation (IFOR)<sup>1</sup> in the mid 1930's. There he met Alan Knott<sup>2</sup>, minister of Richard's Congregational church in Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire. Douwe Faber asked Alan Knott if he knew of a household where Titia could work and perfect her English. For the people of the Netherlands, a fluent command of several foreign languages has long been an important skill for élite women as well as men. German, as the common language of cultivated people throughout Western Europe, was the first foreign tongue before World War II. Douwe Faber, not a professional linguist, spoke or read eight languages.

Alan Knott and his wife Grace invited Titia to live with them and help care for their two sons. Titia and Richard met, fell in love, and married in the Netherlands on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1939. Alan Knott and Titia's brother Heye conducted the church blessing after the town hall ceremony. The bridal couple narrowly escaped from Europe as the UK went to war with Germany on 3<sup>rd</sup> September. Titia would never see her family again.

Richard was the sixth of seven children, whose father abandoned the family when Richard was three. These circumstances and a fear of homelessness greatly affected the Clarkes.

According to family history, A.S. Barrett, a founder of the Holland and Barrett grocery company, had been an apprentice in Richard's grandfather's grocery business in central Cambridge. Shocked at the conditions in which Richard's mother, his former employer's daughter, was living with her children, Mr. Barrett is said to have arranged for the Clarke family to move to Bishop's Stortford in 1913. Mr. Barrett found the Clarke family a small semi-detached house ("Beehive") and perhaps at first he paid the rent. For one adult and six children, there were two single bedrooms and another that just held two beds.

Owing to acute family poverty, and despite desperate appeals to Richard's mother (Mother Clarke) from his headmaster, Richard had to stop formal education after School Certificate. He served an apprenticeship at Millars Machinery Company in Bishop's Stortford and qualified as a draughtsman. He developed a love of drawing, etching and water colour painting that was fundamental to his life. Painting was in a sense an act of worship for him. With Percy Hunt, among other people, Richard founded the Bishop's Stortford Art Society. Percy Hunt would play an important part in Richard's later life. Attending Bishop's Stortford Congregational Church and through the influence of ministers such as Alan Knott<sup>3</sup>, Richard became a convinced Christian pacifist and joined the FOR in 1935. He held responsible office in the church. During the 1930s, Richard was active in organising anti-war demonstrations and taking part in activities supportive of refugees (mainly Jewish).

Titia, one of six children in a poor but secure Protestant minister's family, had finished secondary school and completed a course in household management at the prestigious Household School in Amsterdam (near the Rijksmuseum). She shared Richard's commitment to pacifism and to work for refugees. Like her mother, her sisters and her sisters in law, Titia did not work for wages while married. But, Richard's salary at Millars drawing office paid the rent for a flat where he and Titia lived. They enjoyed a modestly comfortable living.

Nazi forces invaded the Netherlands in May 1940: on 15<sup>th</sup> May the middle of the country's great port city of Rotterdam was reduced to piles of smoking rubble. The Queen and Government fled: then the people of the Netherlands suffered a particularly harsh Nazi Occupation.

Communications between the UK and the Netherlands became very difficult. This must have caused Titia great anguish. Was her family safe?

Titia's German language skills proved serviceable in the early summer of 1940 when the police in Bishop's Stortford asked her to translate some documents. It seems the police did not know the difference between Deutsch (German) and Dutch (as the language of the Netherlands is commonly called in England). Perhaps the (probably monolingual) police wondered how this young woman (now a British citizen) had such good language skills, and why she had good German.

During World War II, Richard was in a reserved occupation as an engineering draughtsman and was not called up. But, as a result of the refugee work, police raided Titia and Richard's flat in June 1940. A complete list was found of names and addresses of refugees living in the area. Most of these were of course Jewish people with German names. The police must have found this very suspicious. A suitcase full of what Richard later ironically called "incriminating books" by authors such as Tolstoi, Dostoyevsky and Turgenev was taken away along with the list of refugees. The following day Richard was dismissed from his job at Millars. Though Richard had worked at Millars for 15 years, there was no redundancy payment. The couple, unable to pay their rent, were evicted and had to move in with Mother Clarke. She and her children, fortunately, now owned "Beehive". Titia and Richard's own furniture was put into storage, where it stayed for eleven years.

Richard's job loss set in motion a train of events that made the finding of subsequent employment very difficult, because so much of the country's engineering capacity was used in making armaments. Jim Clark, a colleague, close friend and fellow-pacifist, was dismissed from Millars at the same time as Richard. Jim moved with his family to work at ICI in Huddersfield in Yorkshire.

Such were the difficulties of finding employment in 1940 that Richard and Titia, who was pregnant, for some time earned money doing domestic work. In early November 1940, Richard and Titia even had to live separately, for Richard had found work near Coventry. After settling into the job, he wrote<sup>4</sup> to tell Titia that he feared the work assisted the war effort. She wrote back saying she would never ask him to do anything against his conscience and gave him solid support.

A few days later, she and Richard made the twenty-minute walk from Beehive to the small friendly Bishop's Stortford Hospital, as there was no transport. Their daughter Marieke was born soon afterwards. Titia had had a normal pregnancy, but haemorrhaged severely, and died four days later from a faulty blood transfusion. The fact that the delivery coincided with an air raid will not have made the doctor's task any easier, but, 20 years later, he told a family member that he had never experienced a haemorrhage like this one. The case was clearly beyond his competence as a small town family doctor. One fortunate side-effect of the War was that scientists came to know more about blood groups so that women did not regard blood transfusions as a death sentence.<sup>5</sup>

Who was to look after Marieke? The question was urgent, as there were cases of measles in the children's ward at Bishop's Stortford hospital. Titia's family were all on the far side of the North Sea, cut off by war. At this critical moment, the Clarkes saw who their friends were. The home of Percy Hunt, cofounder of the Bishop's Stortford Art Society, was in the next road to the Hospital. Perhaps someone there told the Hunt household about the disaster in the maternity ward. Mr Hunt's wife's sister, Frances Lutterloch, had just retired from work as domiciliary midwife. Her task was to live in the homes of middle class new mothers, who at that time stayed in bed for a month after their deliveries, and she cared for the babies. Miss Lutterloch, who now lived with her sister and Percy Hunt, offered to look after Marieke. The baby stayed in this loving home for about one year. Later Mother Clarke took her back to "Beehive." The Hunts continued to give devoted care to Marieke till they died at advanced ages.

Another family of true friends was that of Jim Clark in Huddersfield. He found a job for Richard with ICI. The widowed father worked there, living with Jim's family till early 1942, but Richard was far from his home town and his baby. Many years later, he told his now adult daughter how terribly lonely he was at this time.



When Marieke was just over two years old, Mother Clarke, now about 70, unsurprisingly found too exhausting the single-handed full time care of a lively toddler seven days a week all the year round. This task was combined with housekeeping for Richard, who, from 1942, was commuting by train to work in London. Phyllis, Richard's sister, gained permission from the state<sup>6</sup> to stop paid work to run "Beehive" and relieve Mother Clarke. As a result of Phyllis's extraordinary generosity in giving up her job, she lost 30 years of state pension rights and retired on a miserable sum at the last possible moment.<sup>7</sup>

From 1941 onwards, Richard had steady work that he could conscientiously do even during wartime. But between June and December 1940, he had lost his job, his home, his capacity to support his family, his wife, and finally, the experience of living with his baby daughter. His conscientious objection to war exacted from him a very heavy price. Titia's death was unconnected with the war, but, despite being totally financially dependent on Richard and pregnant, she gave him full support in his conscientious objection to war work. If she had not been committed to Christian pacifism, perhaps she would not have had the strength to give such support when no money was coming into the family purse. Without such support, Richard's dilemma in the middle months of 1940 would have been even worse. Family members and friends made huge sacrifices to support Richard in his traumatic experiences.

Richard became a Quaker following his second marriage, in 1955, to Ursula Davies who died in 1986. He served as an overseer and elder to Thaxted Monthly Meeting and Clerk to Essex and Suffolk General Meeting. He married Ursula's friend Josephine Cox in Newtown Quaker Meeting in 1987. He died in February 1998 in Saffron Walden.

*Story told by Marieke Faber Clarke, greatly assisted by the Testimony prepared in memory of Richard Clarke for Yearly Meeting 2000.*

## Notes

1. The Fellowship of Reconciliation had its origins in a Conference of 130 persons at Cambridge during 1914.
2. Alan Knott BSc. was a distinguished Congregational minister. He published *The times of Jesus Christ* (Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1953) in which he argued that the Jews during Christ's lifetime were in much the same position as that in which the Czechs, the Danes, the Dutch and the Norwegians found themselves from 1940 to 1945. "It must never be forgotten", wrote Alan Knott, "that Jesus belonged to a subject race. His country was under the rule of the Romans, and most Jews bitterly resented their servitude".
3. Alan Knott was appointed to serve Carrs Lane Congregational Church in central Birmingham at about the time of Titia and Richard's wedding.
4. There was no telephone at Beehive till after the War.
5. Titia's elder sister used this expression to the writer, having herself had a near-fatal post-natal haemorrhage.
6. All unmarried women were required in wartime to do paid work.
7. Titia's family in the Netherlands, shocked at the terrible UK pension provision in the 1970's, contributed to a fund so that Phyllys in her old age could live in an Abbeyfield Home near Beehive.



Stephen Lee

My father, **Stephen Lee**, was a conscientious objector during the Second World War. He joined the Friends Ambulance Unit in 1942 and was sent to India. His first assignment was to advise tea planters in Assam on how to build air raid shelters to protect their workers. At this point in the war, with the recent experience of bombing in Britain, it was thought to be only a matter of time before the Japanese bombed India. It never happened.

Soon after, a massive cyclone hit the coast of Bengal, and the FAU took on a humanitarian role in famine relief, restoring water supplies, rebuilding homes, and setting up village self-employment schemes. My mother **Ruth Lee** joined him and was one of a team of health workers providing milk for mothers and children. My father was involved at one point in organizing prayer meetings in Bengal for Gandhi, who travelled constantly as part of his nonviolent civil resistance work for Indian independence. They were both later involved in ambulance work in 1946 during the Hindu-Muslim riots in Calcutta.

Conscientious objection was something my father shared with other members of his family. His brother Michael was also an objector, and was part of setting up the Pacifist Service Unit (PSU) in Liverpool, helping bombed out families with everything from decorating houses, to taking kids to school and helping with money management. The PSUs modelled later developments in social work, supporting the whole family.

My grandparents were managers and houseparents of a hostel for conscientious objectors in Manchester. While not underestimating the impact of the tribunal experience on my father, you could say he was well supported. He was part of a Quaker family. He was employed in a family firm in Birkenhead making woven textiles, and while the factory went into khaki production during wartime, which meant that the pacifist Lees had to leave, they went back into business with the wider family in the late 1940s with seemingly minimal acrimony. His work in the Indian FAU was hard and physically demanding, but fascinating. He was young and able to cope. He was out of Britain for most of the war, and so did not experience any social ostracism directly.

As a child growing up with my cousins in Birkenhead Quaker Meeting, I was very proud of what my parents did. My father was a mild man, not easily roused, but I have strong memories of the passion with which he spoke about his pacifism. He told me how the basic purpose of the army was killing people, and that was wrong. I attribute my work in *Turning the Tide*, trying to educate and train in the power of nonviolent resistance, to his quiet inspiration.

*Story told by Sue Smith*

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Further reading.

**WILL WARREN a scrapbook:**  
**A Quaker in Northern Ireland**, edited by John Lampen  
(Quaker Home Service, 1983).

**Objection overruled: conscription and conscience in the First World War**, David Boulton (Dales Historical Monographs in association with Friends Historical Society, 2014)

**Opposing World War I: courage and conscience is an information briefing about conscientious objection and peace activism in the First World War**, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Pax Christi, Peace Pledge Union, Quaker Peace & Social Witness and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 2014

**Pacifists in action: the experience of the Friends Ambulance Unit in the Second World War**, Lyn Smith  
(William Sessions Limited, York, England, 1998)



“The emphasis on personal action, which in the case of war means abstention, inevitably raises the problem of where one draws the line. In the total wars of the first half of this century, Quakers accepted non-combatant service with the armed forces, served in an independent but uniformed Friends Ambulance Unit, relieved the sufferings of civilian war victims, did alternative civilian service of ‘national importance’ at home, went to prison for refusing any service which might assist the war effort, even fire-watching. Some refused to pay taxes. There are no formal rules laid down for Quaker conduct in such circumstances, other than to follow the Light of Christ.”

### **Quaker Faith and Practice 24.12**

## **Quaker belief in action:** conscientious objectors in the First and Second World Wars

This booklet tells the stories of conscientious objectors to the First and Second World Wars, as remembered by current members of Oxford Quaker Meeting. Conscientious objectors refused to be conscripted into the armed forces, and their stand against what the state demanded of them affected their family and friends as well. This is an important part of past witness to the Quaker peace testimony. The struggles of conscience and what we are called to do today are as relevant as ever.

Front cover photograph of the International Conscientious Objectors Memorial Stone printed with permission of the Peace Pledge Union



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