



ENGLISH HERITAGE

Richmond Castle

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION AND THE RICHMOND SIXTEEN

INFORMATION FOR TEACHERS



The prison cells, built in the nineteenth century adjoining the twelfth-century keep.

INTRODUCTION

The prison cells at Richmond Castle were used to hold conscientious objectors, men who refused to fight on moral or religious grounds during the two World Wars. The surviving graffiti on the walls of the cells, written and drawn by prisoners, includes graffiti by some of the 16 men imprisoned during the First World War who were taken to France, court-martialled for refusing orders and sentenced to death. The Richmond Sixteen, as these men became known, were among the first in this country to defy conscription on moral grounds.

This booklet looks at the issue of conscientious objection during the First World War and raises some of the conflicting views through the use of contemporary sources of evidence. It can be used to complement site-based work at Richmond Castle as part of a World study after 1900 (QCA unit 18) and Citizenship at Key Stage 3. The issues raised by the treatment of conscientious objectors can form part of discussions about Remembrance Day or Citizenship at Key Stage 2. An information booklet for teachers on Richmond Castle's medieval past is also available.



One of eight prison cells where conscientious objectors were imprisoned during the First World War. The graffiti written by these prisoners still survives on many of the fragile lime-washed walls.

The cells cannot be opened to the public because of their fragile condition, however, part of the exhibition in the visitors' centre focuses on this important aspect of the history of the castle and includes a virtual reality exploration of the cells.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

By the early twentieth century, most European countries had increased their regular armies to millions of men through the introduction of universal military service. Great Britain however, had not followed this trend. At the outbreak of war in 1914, Britain had an army of just 450,000 regulars (professional soldiers) and 268,000

territorials, who were part-time. This was the smallest regular army of any of the participants in the 1914-1918 War.

At the outbreak of war, Field Marshall Lord Kitchener who had been made Secretary of War in August 1914, took immediate steps to expand the land forces by introducing a campaign of voluntary recruitment. The first national appeal 'A Call to Arms' was issued that month. Powerful patriotic propaganda was produced to encourage people to enlist. It was evidently very effective: nearly 2.5 million men were to enlist over the next 16 months, before conscription was introduced.

There was great moral and social pressure on men to enlist: propaganda emphasised men's duty to protect the country and its defenceless women and children, playing on the nation's patriotic and imperial pride. In some cases postcards were sent to un-enlisted men inviting them to join the girl guides. Red discs bearing the message 'Not at home - a man from this house now serving in his majesty's service' were placed in house windows, so that it was obvious who had not enlisted. In an era where gender identities were strictly defined, men were expected to go to war.



Propaganda posters before the introduction of conscription.

Recruiting figures began to decline steadily during 1915 as the casualties on the battlefields rose. The government responded by organising a new propaganda campaign headed by Lord Beaverbrooke, who was in charge of the Ministry of Information. This campaign was carefully planned to channel fear at the threat of invasion, and horror at the increasingly visible impact of the war, into greater commitment to the war effort.

Conscription

With no sign of the war coming to an end as had initially been predicted, and the massive number of casualties sustained in the first year of fighting, there was an urgent need for more soldiers. By the end of 1915, it was clear that Britain would be forced to break with the tradition of voluntary enlistment. In January 1916, the British Government passed The Military Service Act introducing conscription for the first time. Men could now be forced to go to war. On 2 March 1916, the Act took effect and conscription was introduced first for single men (18-41 years old) and by May that year, married men of the same age could also be conscripted.



Conscientious objectors

The new conscription laws allowed men to object or appeal against military service on grounds of occupation, hardship, faith or moral beliefs. Many non-conformist religious groups such as Quakers and Wesleyan Methodists held strong pacifist beliefs, strictly following the biblical commandment 'Thou shalt not kill'. Men involved in the Labour movement including socialist groups also objected to the war on political and humanitarian grounds and correspondingly many of them sought exemption from military service. Local tribunals were set up under the Military Services Act of 1916 to assess the objectors' cases and judge whether those seeking exemption were motivated by conscience or cowardice. The tribunals were often headed by military and civic officials, and their decisions may not have been objective. Few if any of the conscientious objectors (or COs as they became known) who went before the tribunals were given total exemptions. Most were ordered into the fighting services or to join the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC).

The NCC was established so that men with strong objections to combat could still be conscripted, but not actually be forced to fight. The NCC, although part of the armed forces, did not go into battle but supported the fighting troops, for instance by preparing and packing weapons or building aerodromes and military buildings. In total, 3,300 men served in the NCC during the First World War. Some conscientious objectors chose to drive ambulances, for the Field Ambulance Unit helping those wounded in the war but not actually contributing to the war itself.

Some COs even refused to undertake non-combatant duties, opposing any contribution to the war effort whatsoever. These men refused to adhere to any military

**TREATMENT OF OBJECTORS - EFFORT
TO GIVE FAIR PLAY:
GENUINE CASES TO BE SIFTED OUT.**

'The Shirkers'

"...all men whose objections to active military service are founded on honest conviction ought to be able and will be able to avail themselves of the exemption which parliament provided"

[However] "men who put forward objections of this kind as a pretext... to cover their indifference to respond to the national call and who are therefore guilty of the double offence of cowardice and hypocrisy, will be treated as they ought to be treated with the utmost rigour".

An article from the Northern Echo 30 June 1916 describing the official attitude to objectors.

discipline such as participating in drills or wearing uniforms; they are often referred to as 'absolutists' because of this stance. By disobeying orders as conscripted (if Non-Combatant) soldiers, they were court martialled and punished. Many were imprisoned, often in terrible, cramped conditions. The treatment of absolutist conscientious objectors, including those imprisoned in the cell block at Richmond Castle, caused heated local and national debate. Although many people hated the 'conchies', the bullying and brutal treatment of COs, particularly absolutists, raised many questions about human rights, and increasingly aroused public sympathy and respect from other soldiers who were too afraid to make a stand.

The Richmond Sixteen

Richmond Castle served as a base for the Non-Combatant Corps from 1916. COs from across the north were sent to join the NCC at Richmond and these included 16 men who stuck to their pacifist principles and like other absolutist objectors around the country, refused to do anything to promote or contribute to the war. In May 1916, these 16 men were taken from Richmond against their

He heard on Saturday of a case of a man in Yorkshire who was taken to Richmond, and because he resisted he was frog-marched through the town and came back in a bleeding condition. That was not the kind of treatment to put a stop to this problem. These men might be unwise, stupid, foolish, but that was utterly un-English treatment. He knew of many cases, on the other hand, of extraordinary kindness shown by the military. Bullying should be sternly dealt with by the War Office. He wanted, too, to stop the large number of new cases that would arise unless something further were done.

Transcript of a newspaper article from 13 May 1916 describing the treatment of a Conscientious Objector in Richmond.

will to an army camp in northern France. This meant that they were on active service where refusal to obey orders was punishable by death. News of their transport to France only leaked out, because one man threw a note from the train window in London. Later John Brocklesby, one of the men from Richmond, sent a coded postcard saying they were in Boulogne. The Richmond Sixteen were put into field punishment camps where they continued to defy military orders and were severely punished. When asked to assist with the unloading of war supplies, all but one refused this work, and were consequently court-martialled and sentenced to death on 14 June 1916. Kitchener, who had introduced conscription, had wanted to make an example of them by having them shot for refusing to obey orders. By coincidence, just before the death sentence was due to be carried out, Kitchener died suddenly (when his ship was sunk by a German mine), so at the eleventh hour, the sentence was commuted to ten years hard labour by Asquith, who was Prime Minister at the time. Mounting pressure on the government both from MPs and from the general public probably swayed this judgement. Arthur Rowntree, an MP for York and a Quaker, took up the cause of the Richmond Sixteen and campaigned for their release at a high level. Alfred

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

**DARLINGTON MEN HANDED OVER
TO THE MILITARY**

At Darlington yesterday, Herbert G. Laws (24), and William R. Laws (25), of Elton-parade, were handed over to the military authorities for failing to report for military service.

Lieutenant Spencer said they were educated men, and should not be dealt with differently from others. They had used their education to set the military authorities at defiance. He had exceeded his duty in writing to them a second time, and ought to have issued instructions for their arrest. For the past eight or nine days they were practically deserters.

This being the first case of the kind no penalty was imposed by the magistrates.

Northern Echo 9 May 1916

Martlew one of the Richmond Sixteen worked as a clerk at the chocolate factory owned by the Rowntree family. There was also increasing public sympathy, and a number of groups emerged in support of the COs including the National Council against Conscription and the No-Conscription Fellowship.

On their return from France the Richmond Sixteen, with the other absolutist conscientious objectors, were imprisoned again in labour camps and civil prisons. Although they stayed true to their pacifist principles, imprisonment took its toll; all the objectors suffered severe long-term psychological effects. After their release they continued to pay for their stand; many found themselves social outcasts unable to get jobs or settle back into the lives and communities they had left behind them. Communities in shock in the aftermath of the war, found it difficult to accept those who had not risked their lives to protect others, when so many husbands, brothers and sons had been killed.

The moral convictions of the Richmond Sixteen and other conscientious objectors who were willing to suffer punishment, imprisonment and potentially even execution for their beliefs, changed public attitudes toward conscientious objection and pacifism. They

brought the issue of conscientious objection to public attention and began to win acceptance and respect for it. Their accounts of their time in prison led to reforms in prison conditions shortly after the war. They set the scene for objection to compulsory military service in the Second World War and although many records, such as tribunal papers, were destroyed at the end of the war, surviving evidence about these men gives a different perspective on life during the First World War. Many more men and some women sought exemption from service in the 1939-45 war and conscientious objection to war continues in many countries today.

Sending Objectors to France

Mr. King (R. Somerset N.): Are we to understand that men are to be subject to severe legal penalties for the crime which the right honourable gentleman describes as "cowardise and hypocrisy," without any trial by their peers?

Mr. Asquith: On the contrary, the object of this procedure is to prevent the possibility of that happening.

Admiral Sir Hadworth Meux (U., Portsmouth: Is there one sentence in Holy Writ which justifies cowards who will not defend women and children? (Cheers, and cries of "Oh!")

Mr. Whitehouse: Will the right hon. gentleman prevent the dispatch of more conscientious objectors to France?

Mr. Asquith: So far as the War Office for which I am at present responsible, is concerned, no soldiers will be sent to France who we have good reason to believe is a conscientious objector.

Newspaper report from the Houses of Parliament 30th June 1916.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

The following educational approaches show teachers how to use Richmond Castle and the sources of information about conscientious objectors to support history and citizenship projects, particularly at KS3. The impact of the World Wars can be used as part of a history project such as KS3 'A world study after 1900', or related to Remembrance Day at other Key Stages. The views of conscientious objectors and their opponents can be used to consider differing views and beliefs as part of a citizenship programme of study considering issues such as pacifism, human rights, differing religious and political beliefs and the impact and reaction of communities to war. The education approaches also suggest literacy and art activities that can be developed from these themes. The discussion points included should be adapted to the needs and level of your group.

Before your visit

A preliminary visit to Richmond Castle will help you to plan your visit and how you will use the different areas of the site and the exhibition as part of your structured education work. The background information in this booklet and the following activities can be used to introduce conscientious objection to pupils before their visit:

- pupils can research conscientious objectors in your area, through local papers (May - July 1916) or local museums. This may not be possible in all areas but many libraries hold records and newspapers on microfilm and some potential starting points are included in *Useful Resources*

- the class can develop ideas for re-enacting a tribunal, using the documents included in this booklet

The Richmond Sixteen

William Law, Darlington
Herbert Law, Darlington
John 'Bert' Brocklesby, Doncaster
Norman Gaudie, Sunderland
Alfred Martlew, York
Clarence Hall, Leeds
Horace Eaton
C Cartwright, Leeds
E C Cryer, Leeds
C R Jackson, Leeds
Alfred Myers, Cleveland
C A Senior, Leeds
E S Spencer, Leeds
Leonard Renton, Leeds
JW Routledge, Leeds

The name of the sixteenth conscientious objector from Richmond is not known. When the Richmond Sixteen were taken to France in May 1916, with the threat of further punishment and court-martial he decided to join the Non-Combatant Corps and no more is known of him.



Alfred Myers of Cleveland.



John 'Bert' Brocklesby came from Doncaster. He was a gifted artist and a Methodist who preached that 'war was against the teachings of the Christian Church'. This photograph was taken many years after his imprisonment.



Cell graffiti

Herbert Law (left) was a decorator and his older brother, William (right) was a storekeeper. Like many of the Richmond Sixteen they came from a radical family; their mother was an early suffragette.



This can then be developed at Richmond Castle by investigating what happened to some of those who were refused exemption by the tribunals.

At Richmond Castle

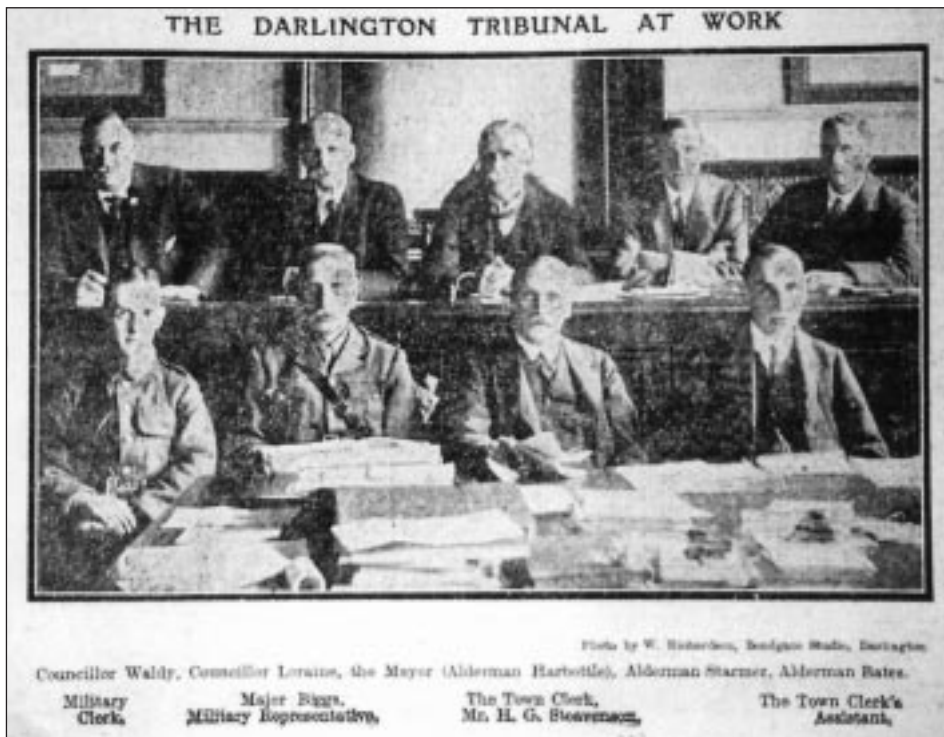
The exhibition at the castle and the outside of the cell block, with the information in this booklet can be used to investigate conscientious objectors and the story of the Richmond Sixteen.

The exhibition

The exhibition is divided into three parts; the medieval castle, life in the castle and town and the military history of the castle (nineteenth and twentieth century). The areas are fairly small and used by visiting members of public. It is therefore advisable that no more than 15 pupils work in the whole exhibition area at one time supervised by an accompanying adult. Although work relating to COs will require using a specific area of the exhibition, pupils can look at the first parts of the exhibition to put this aspect of twentieth-century history into the broader history of the site. The exhibition includes models of the castle, pictures of the castle and town, artefacts and interactive exhibits, with a timeline leading to the third part of the exhibition.

The story of the Richmond Sixteen and other conscientious objectors imprisoned at the castle can be investigated in the military history section of the exhibition. This area includes a reconstructed cell, a virtual reality touchscreen showing the cells in which conscientious objectors were imprisoned and further information about COs. The following targeted activities will help focus the pupils work in the exhibition, groups of 3 or 4 pupils can work on each activity in turn:

- the graffiti in the reconstructed cell can be investigated. Pupils can



Local newspapers regularly reported on developments relating to the war including tribunal decisions.

THE NORTH STAR. THURSDAY, APRIL 6, 1916.

MORE THAN EXPECTED.

—

SURPRISE AT ARMY ALLOWANCE

—

TRIBUNAL APPEALS.

—

There were 145 cases down for hearing at the Durham City Appeals Tribunal, at Durham, yesterday.

A Bishop Auckland applicant appeared in uniform, and Alderman House remarked: "You look as if you are fairly in it now."

Applicant: The Government allowance is more than we expected.

Alderman House: It cannot be that you want to leave the Army because you are getting too much?

Applicant: No: I have just come to withdraw the appeal.

THE SOCIETY OF FRIENDS

There were 13 applications from Darlington, and these included two brothers who asked for total exemption on conscientious grounds. One of the brothers make materials for that purpose. He would not be satisfied with any other decision than total exemption. He was willing to suffer for his conscience. He was not a full member of the Society of Friends.

DARLINGTON APPEALS

AN OBJECTOR'S "ASPIRATION OF THOUGHT."

The Darlington Borough Tribunal had a tighter task than usual yesterday, when the appeals dealt with numbered nearly thirty. The majority of them presented no special feature of interest.

One young man who raised conscientious objection to military service said he "objected to fighting on aspiration of thought."

The Mayor: That's rather a vague statement.

Applicant said he was not accustomed to warfare.

The Clerk (Mr Steavenson): None of us are.

Further questioned, applicant said he had held his views long before the war. His application was refused.

A month's exemption was given to a young operator at a cinema, the military holding that his occupation was not expedient in the national interests.

look for evidence of the men who wrote the graffiti, linking the names found to the information about the Richmond Sixteen nearby. Words in the graffiti that express the feelings of the men imprisoned can be recorded and thought given to why the men wrote or drew on the walls. This can be developed further by pupils making plaster tiles in the classroom and carving their own graffiti. Pupils need to carefully consider the message they will leave behind

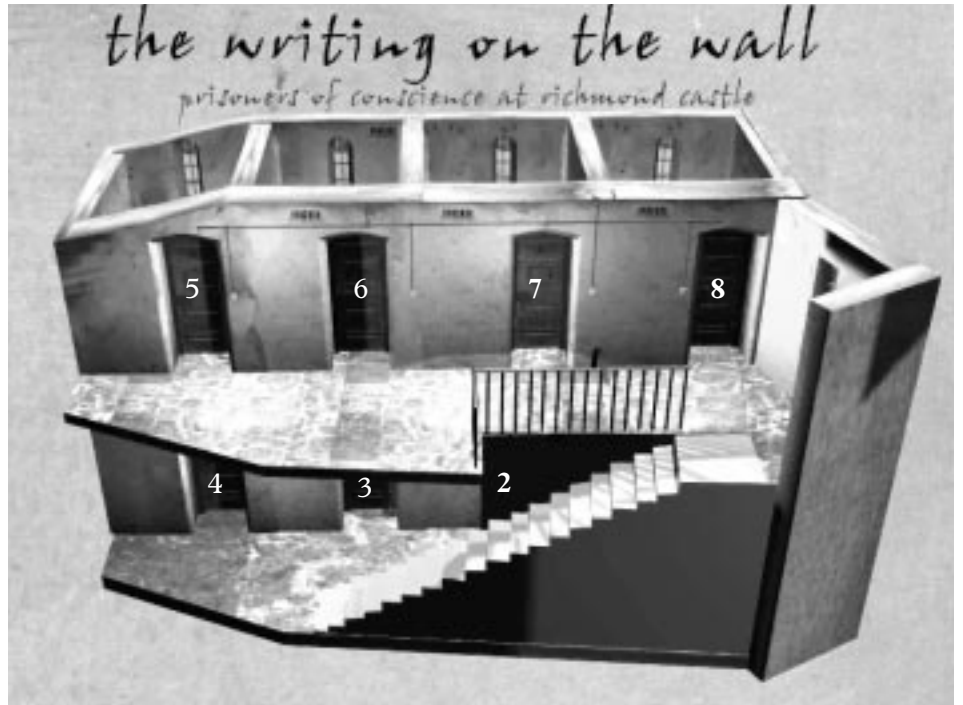
- the cell reconstruction can be measured, including the bed, window and door. This can be used to draw a plan of the cell and the size checked with the exterior of the actual cell block

■ the virtual reality touchscreen can be used by small groups to investigate the graffiti in the cells. It is recommended that pupils explore cells 2, 7 & 8, looking at the graffiti extracts and reading the accompanying text (by touching the pencil icon) to find out about three of the men imprisoned - 'Bert' Brocklesby, Norman Gaudie and JJ Burchell.

■ pupils can identify the following four people from images, photographs and models in the exhibition: guard (model), lady (photograph), volunteer (photograph) and one of the marching protesters (painting). The thoughts and feelings of these four people can be recorded. Pupils can write speech bubbles explaining who these people are and what they are doing. Statements about these people's feelings about the war can also be imagined and recorded.

The Castle

The cell block forms part of the castle buildings next to the keep. The outside of the cell block and its setting can be explored. There were other military buildings within the walls of the castle in the



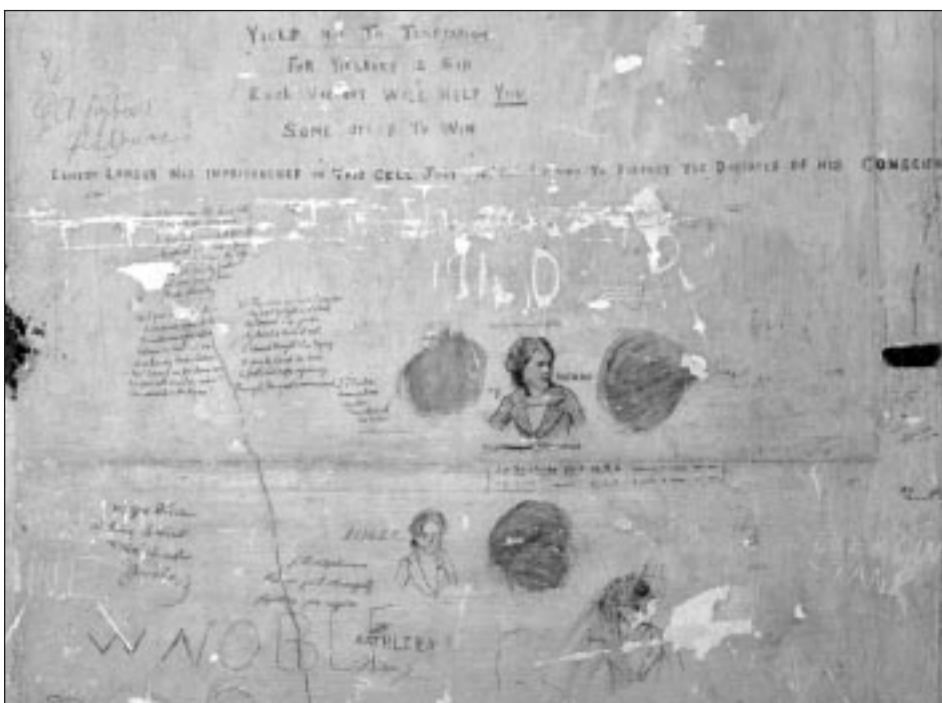
The virtual reality reconstruction of the cell block. Cells 2, 7 and 8 provide good examples of graffiti.

early twentieth century and the atmosphere would have been very different from today. Activities can include:

■ creative writing about the walk up to the cell block from the entrance, recording the possible thoughts of a conscientious objector, knowing he was about to be imprisoned. Pupils can start by recording 5 words that describe

how he might have felt

■ the outside of the cell block can be measured and the size of the cell and window compared to the reconstructed cell in the exhibition. The width of each cell will be the same as the distance between the windows, the length of each cell will be equal to the outside wall from the door, allowing for the width of the internal stone walls



Some of the graffiti in cell 8 showing the graffiti from both the First and Second World Wars.

■ comparing the very limited view from the prison windows with the views from the top of the keep. Unfortunately pupils cannot actually look out of the prison windows, but the view can be seen by standing near the windows and limiting pupils' views either by using a card frame or even a cardboard box with a small window cut out. Pupils can look at the view for 30 seconds and imagine looking at that view for a day or a week. Pupils can record what they could see and hear and how the imprisoned men might have felt. The views can be drawn or photographed and further developed in the classroom

■ pupils can also imagine what

they could see looking in through the windows from the outside.

Ideas and thoughts gathered at the castle can be used to develop art work focusing on how the cells might have looked in the past with prisoners inside, how the cells look today or a montage of images expressing thoughts and feelings.

Follow-up work

The material that is provided in this booklet alongside information, thoughts and feelings gathered at the castle provides a good forum for discussing the views and feelings of different groups of people both in the past and today. These activities support history skills, PHSE and aspects of citizenship such as understanding other people's views and experiences and respecting different religious convictions and feelings. There are also good links to discussions about bullying, what is right and wrong and social and moral dilemmas. Pupils can work in groups using the statements from the shaded boxes to decide who might have made each statement; military personnel, ordinary people, conscientious objectors or absolutists.

Divide the pupils into four groups, each considering the views of one group of people, using the pictures and questions opposite, each group considers the question as if they were COs, absolutists, military personnel or ordinary people at the time. They can use the sources and quotes to help support their statements, or they can try to imagine what people thought. Each group can present their findings or views to the rest of the group in one of the following ways:

■ as a series of written statements (As conscientious objectors we ...)

■ by devising a short play or a tableau that shows the group's views. For example COs and

Statements from Absolutists

They can take me where they will, even into the front line trenches, but they will never get me to raise my hand against my fellow men (John 'Bert' Brocklesby, one of the Richmond Sixteen).

My motive for refusing is because my 'religious convictions' prevent me from taking any part in the military system whatsoever and I am therefore bound to disobey any military orders in loyalty to those convictions which are based on the spirit and teaching of Christ (Court Martial statement of Norman Gaudie June 1916)

Banner slogans and quotes sympathetic to conscientious objectors

Say No to compulsory military service

Repeal the Military Service Act.

War means surrender of the Christian ideal and the denial of human brotherhood

War is an evil that the whole world longs to end

All men are brothers

Banner slogans and quotes hostile to conscientious objectors

*Fight Germans not our Government
The Battle for Truth and Freedom is in Flanders*

Conchies are a disgrace to our town and our country

*My two brothers died in France.
They fought for us all - even you.*





Injustice! Even cowards share the fruits of victory

Resist German Aggression with Weapons not Words

Before the war, I agreed with them (COs), but now I feel that they aren't men. When my husband and I go out with him wearing uniform, I wonder what it must be like to be married to one of those men. You would think they'd want to slink around corners if they met anyone they knew.

I'd shoot the lot of them. Isn't conscription in? If my boy's got to go why shouldn't they?

I am a broadminded person, but I think COs should be horsewhipped. If they're living in this country, they should be willing to fight for it.

<p>Conscientious Objectors</p> <p>Why were they conscientious objectors?</p> <p>What were their views on war?</p> 	<p>Absolutists</p> <p>Why were they absolutists?</p> <p>What were their views on war?</p> 
<p>Military (soldiers, officers)</p> <p>What did they think of conscientious objectors?</p> 	<p>Ordinary people</p> <p>What did they think of conscientious objectors?</p> 

absolutists could present their case to a tribunal. Military personnel and ordinary people could discuss their views

■ writing an article or a letter to a newspaper about their views.
writing a poem or article for a book about conscientious objectors

■ writing diary entries.

It is important to show that people had very different views depending on their family background, personal circumstances, religion, moral and political beliefs, and that these changed during the course of the war and these views were often very different from those held today:

■ the experiences of the conscientious objectors and the absolutists during the First World War can be considered in a modern context to show pupils that it is not just an issue from history (examples are included in 'Biting the Moral Bullet')

■ pupils can discuss modern media coverage of wars including Britain's involvement in recent conflicts for example the Falklands War or Gulf war.

Come at me with your sword
strike me with your rod
though I be slain a thousand times
I will not fight my God.

If you take a sword and clean it
To run a fellow through
The government ought to answer
for it
God will send the bill to you.

Ernest Lawson July 14th 1916
(Graffiti written in cell 1)

You might as well try to dry a floor
by throwing water on it as try to
end this war by fighting.

RLB
(Graffiti written in cell 5)

MAKING A VISIT

Opening hours:

See www.english-heritage.org.uk for opening hours or contact Customer Services on 0870 333 1181.

Booking procedure: Educational visits are free if booked at least two weeks in advance via:
English Heritage
Yorkshire Region,
37 Tanner Row,
York YO1 6WP.
Tel: 01904 601901.

Maximum party numbers: 100 with staff to pupil ratio of at least 1:15. Pupils must be supervised at all times. The exhibition area is limited to 15 pupils with one adult supervising, 30 minutes is allowed for each group on busy days.

Facilities

Access for disabled visitors:

Steps in places, no access to upper floors except in the exhibition, where there is a stair lift.

Toilets: On site.

Shop: Our custodians welcome school parties as all proceeds contribute towards the work of English Heritage. Please supervise your pupils when visiting the shop.

Picnics: Can be eaten on site. Please take all litter home.

USEFUL RESOURCES

Lockey, M & Walmsley, D, *Art and the Historic Environment*. English Heritage 1999.

ISBN 1-85074-651-6

O'Donnell, K (Ed), *Biting the Moral Bullet*. Hodder & Stoughton 1997. ISBN 0-340-66410-X

Purkis, S, *Using Memorials*.

English Heritage 1995.

ISBN 1-85074-493-9

Silkin, J (Ed), *The Penguin Book of World War I Poetry*. Penguin.

ISBN 0-141-180099

Other sources of information

The Peace Museum (open Wed and Fri 11 - 3 pm and by appointment)
10 Piece Hall Yard, Bradford
BD1 1PJ. Tel. 01274 780241
www.peacemuseum.org.uk

Public Record Office
Kew, Richmond, Surrey TW9 4DV
Tel. 020 8392 5202
www.pro.org.uk

Imperial War Museum
Lambeth Road, London SE1 6HZ
Tel. 020 7416 5320
www.iwp.org.uk

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