



**“Though the law may
deem me to be a soldier,**

**no power
on earth,**

**military or other, can make
me into a soldier”**

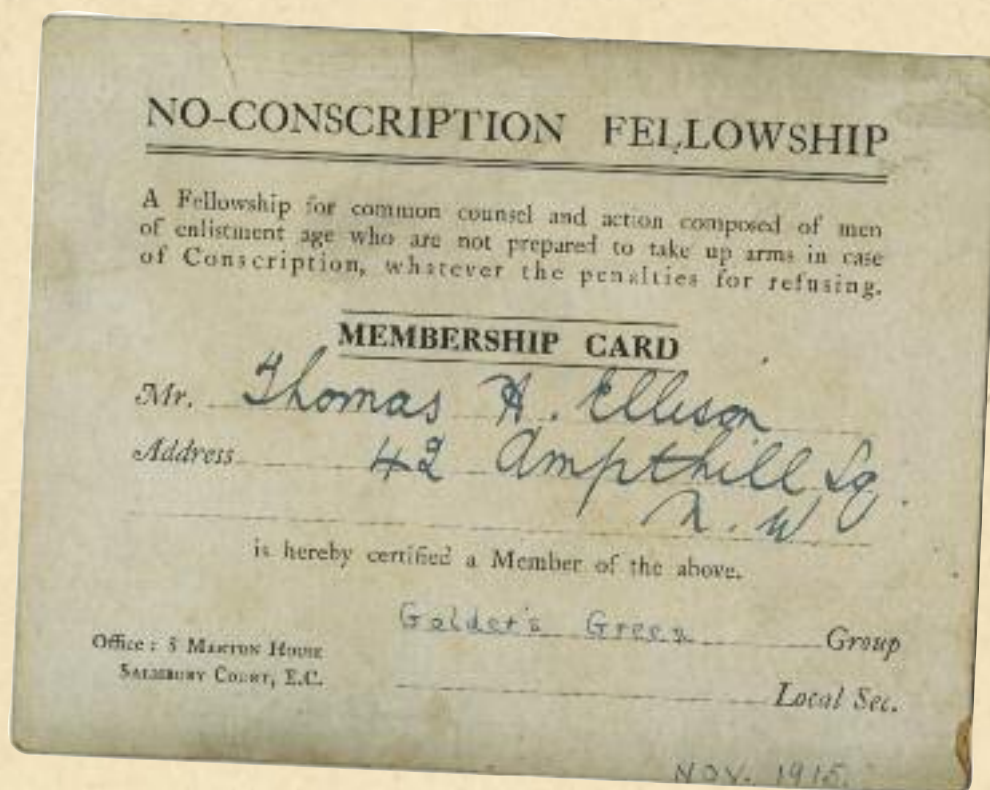
James Hudson

Compiled by 'Steve Illingworth - educational consultant, 2015, drawing on research undertaken by WCML volunteers Chris Clayton and Veronica Trick



No Power On Earth

Conscientious Objectors In Salford



Learning resources for use in schools

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Conscientious Objectors

Britain went to war against Germany in August 1914, at the start of what became known as the First World War. For the first year and a half of the war, Britain's army was made up of a small number of professional soldiers and a large number of men who volunteered to fight. During 1915, due to the need to replace the large number of war casualties, the government started to talk about the idea of conscription. This means that a law would be passed to force men of a certain age group to fight in the war. Many people objected to this idea, for a variety of reasons. Some said that the government had no right to force people to fight, as this was interfering with their individual freedoms. There were some people who believed that war is always wrong, sometimes due to their religious beliefs. Some thought that wars could occasionally be justified but that this particular war was wrong. For all these reasons a campaign began as early as November 1914 to oppose a conscription law. The main organisation behind this campaign was the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF), which was very active in the Manchester and Salford areas.

In January 1916, the British government passed a law to bring in conscription. All unmarried men between the ages of 18 and 41 had to join the armed forces. Later, this was extended to include married men and those aged up to 51. Some people refused to join the armed forces and they were known as conscientious objectors. They were usually offered the chance to do some kind of useful work towards the war effort without having to fight. If they refused this, the conscientious objectors could be sent to prison. Salford men such as James Hudson and Harry Davies were among the thousands of conscientious objectors who were imprisoned, often suffering very harsh conditions.

Match up the words and phrases on the left with the definitions on the right

casualties

an organisation supporting people who refused to fight in the war

conscription

soldiers killed or injured in battle

conscientious objectors

something the government said that conscientious objectors could do instead of fighting

No-Conscription Fellowship

people who refused to fight because they thought the war was wrong

unmarried men aged 18 to 41

an attempt to persuade people that your ideas are right

useful work towards the war effort

a law that forced people to join the armed forces

campaign

people who had to join the armed forces according to the law of 1916

Harry Davies

What does his story tell us?

After the conscription law was passed in January 1916, Harry Davies was ordered to join the army but he refused.

He was then offered the chance to join the Non Combatant Corps, where people did work for the war effort without actually fighting. Davies refused this as well.

He appeared at the Police Courts in September 1916, where the magistrate's clerk said to Davies, "We shall probably make a man of you before we have finished with you".

He was fined 40 shillings (£2, roughly twice the average weekly wage at that time) and handed to the military authorities.

He was sentenced to two years' imprisonment, served in Walton Prison, Liverpool. Later he agreed to be sent to Dartmoor in south-west England, which was a camp for conscientious objectors to carry out work for the government.

Davies was allowed to leave the camp and return home due to illness.

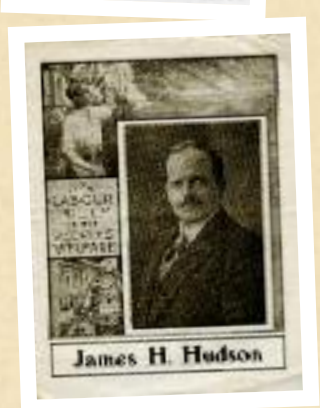
What can we learn about conscientious objectors from this story?

(One example is done for you)

We can learn that some conscientious objectors joined the Non Combatant Corps, where they could help the war effort without fighting.

James Hudson – timeline

- 1881 Born in Flixton, Manchester
- 1907 Became a teacher at The Municipal School for Boys, Pendleton, Salford
- 1915 Became chair of the Manchester branch of the No-Conscription Fellowship, an organisation campaigning against forcing people to fight in the First World War
- December 1915 Salford Council discussed whether Hudson should remain employed as a teacher, as there was a feeling that his anti-war campaigns were stopping local men from volunteering to join the armed forces. The council voted by 24 votes to 8 to let him keep his job
- March 1916 Conscription was introduced. Hudson campaigned against it
- October 1916 Hudson was called up for military service and he refused. At a tribunal to consider his case, he was offered the chance to continue his 'work of national importance' as a teacher. He refused this too, claiming 'absolute exemption' from any work relating even indirectly to the war
- November 1916 Hudson was put on trial and found guilty of not carrying out his military duties
- 1916-1919 Served prison sentences in Wormwood Scrubs and Strangeways. These involved hard labour and bread and water diets for minor rule breaking. Hudson lost three stone in weight while in prison
- 1921 Hudson wanted to stand as Labour Party candidate for Eccles but he was not accepted because of his anti-war campaigning. He became Member of Parliament for Huddersfield and represented the town until 1931
- 1950-55 Member of Parliament for Ealing, near London
- 1962 Died aged 80



Activities

What words could be used to describe to explain Hudson's personality, based on the story?

What might Hudson have thought was the high point of his life? Explain why.

What might Hudson have thought was the low point of his life? Explain why.

James Hudson and the Education Committee – December 1915

Salford Education Committee held a meeting to decide whether Hudson should continue being a teacher, because he was campaigning against the war.

Question asked by chair of the Education Committee

What sort of association is this to which you are said to belong? What are its aims and how do you intend to accomplish the same?

Are your sympathies in the war with England, and do you want us to win, or are you a pro-German and in sympathy with our enemies?

Have you ever discouraged recruiting, realising as you must that do that England's future is now in the balance, and we must have soldiers and as many of them as we can possibly get?

Have you ever tried to imbue your scholars with your own private views regarding political and religious questions in general?

Hudson's reply

The No Conscription Fellowship, of which I am an active member, has been in existence about twelve months. It consists of men who have a conscientious objection to conscription for military services. The body, as its name implies, is purely a fellowship, and exerts no influence to convert people to the views of its associates.

As an Englishman, I strongly regret the suggestion that I am a pro-German and I, of course, desire a successful issue to this war, with British liberties more firmly established and Britain's power for good in the world enhanced.

I would like to repudiate strongly the charge which has been made that I have been "going about the country doing my best to prevent recruiting for his Majesty's army." Neither in public or private have I at any time taken any steps or said anything to prevent voluntary recruiting. Indeed I have gone much further publicly, and have expressed my personal admiration for those who have felt it their duty to take up voluntarily active service for the country in this crisis, and this attitude I maintain.

During the war, and at all times, I have never, by word or otherwise, directly or indirectly, expressed any of my views on religious or political questions to any of the boys at the Secondary School.

Should Hudson have been allowed to continue as a teacher? Based on the evidence presented to the education committee above, what would you decide? Quote from some of the things said during the meeting to support your view about what should happen to Hudson.

Were conscientious objectors treated badly in prison?

Historians A and B have different views about the treatment of conscientious objectors. The other pieces of evidence on this page are original sources from the time of the First World War.

A When conscientious objectors were sent to prison for refusing to join the armed forces, they were often treated worse than real criminals.

B Conscientious objectors in prison were treated fairly well in prison. Conditions there were certainly better than what soldiers in the trenches were suffering.

Last Sunday morning three prisoners 'collapsed' in chapel – two of them C.O.s. The first of the three – a soldier – fell from his seat like a sack and had to be carried out. The two C.O.s became faint whilst standing, and had to be taken out. I think most of us are subject to these attacks occasionally. Any extra exertion makes us dizzy, so that we have to sit down to stop ourselves from falling.

The cause of this general weakness is the low diet, added to the effects of confinement and the nervous strain. I know the food shortage is serious and I do not want to be unreasonable, but I do not think it is an exaggeration to say that existing conditions in prison must very seriously undermine the health of all prisoners who are serving long sentences.

Letter written by Fenner Brockway, serving two years' hard labour in prison in Liverpool (1918)

FREED BUT NOT FREE

Released C.O. Reaches Home Only to Enter an Asylum

A conscientious objector who was liberated from Dorchester Prison on April 8, having completed two years' imprisonment, was found by his family to be out of his mind when he reached his home at Charlbury.

This was not a surprise to them, because they had received from him, a few days before his release, a letter which was disconnected and nonsensical. Yet it had passed the governor.

This man was quite normal before solitary confinement unhinged his mind. He has been sent to an asylum.

Article in Daily News, 22 April 1919

“ A new governor had been appointed, who, according to a letter he (Colonel Wedgwood) had received on Thursday of last week, paraded some 50 objectors and stated: “I will not have these stinking C.O.s mixed up with respectable men.”

(One of the C.O. prisoners then said “Thank you, sir”) The governor immediately ordered him to be taken to the strong room and put in irons. The governor then, for no conceivable reason and without any provocation, said: “I have full power from the Secretary of State. To hell with the C.O.s, to hell with them!” Everybody was threatened with ‘bread and water’ ... Since his arrival the new governor has never spoken of the conscientious objectors in our hearing without being abusive.

The Home Secretary, in reply, denied the whole of the charges contained in the letter received by Colonel Wedgwood ”

Story told to The House of Commons by Colonel Wedgwood about Wandsworth Gaol - reported in the Daily News (7 March 1919)

Activities

1. What do historians A and B (at the top of the page) disagree about?
2. According to the evidence here, what kinds of physical and emotional suffering did the COs have to face?
3. Of the three pieces of evidence here, which one might be the least reliable for historians?
4. What else would we need to know before making a judgment on whether historian A or B provides the best interpretation?
5. Overall, do you think A or B is more accurate?

Here are the stories of four other local conscientious objectors

Frank Elder tells the story of his and George Beresford's adventures

“ I think we may have been unique – my friend George Beresford and I, both Salford lads, - in the way we successfully, travelling by bicycle up and down the length and breadth of Britain, wanted by the military police, went through the whole of the war without being arrested.

We were conscientious objectors; we were socialists of many years standing. My case was turned down at the Salford Tribunal....my case was taken to the House of Commons by William Bydes, M.P. for Salford. Walter Long, the then Home Secretary, refused to alter the decision.

During the waiting period I had seven calling up papers. My friend George Beresford and I then decided not to await arrest, as we had been advised to do, but to take to the road.”

They went to Yorkshire, Scotland and London, sheltering with people who were sympathetic to their beliefs.

Fenner Brockway



Published a weekly newspaper called the 'Labour Leader', printed in Salford and read across the whole of Britain.

Started an organisation called the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF) in 1914, to campaign against any possible conscription.

In 1915, the Home Secretary instructed Salford police to raid the

printers where the newspaper was printed on Blackfriars Street, confiscating copies of the paper plus several anti-war pamphlets.

Brockway was imprisoned in 1916 for his publishing activities and for refusing to take part in military service.



Harold Derbyshire

Harold Derbyshire of Patricroft worked for Eccles Town Council as the assistant to the Borough Treasurer. As one of the first people to join the No-Conscription Fellowship in 1914, he was dismissed from his post after many Eccles councillors argued that his views were incompatible with his position in public office. Derbyshire had to attend a Tribunal in March 1916 to explain his refusal to enlist in the army. He said that "it is impossible for me as a Christian to put my conscience at the disposal of the state". Despite this plea, Derbyshire was sentenced first to six months' hard labour at Carlisle Prison, followed by a later sentence of two years' hard labour.

See pages 3, 4 and 5 for information about Harry Davies and James Hudson

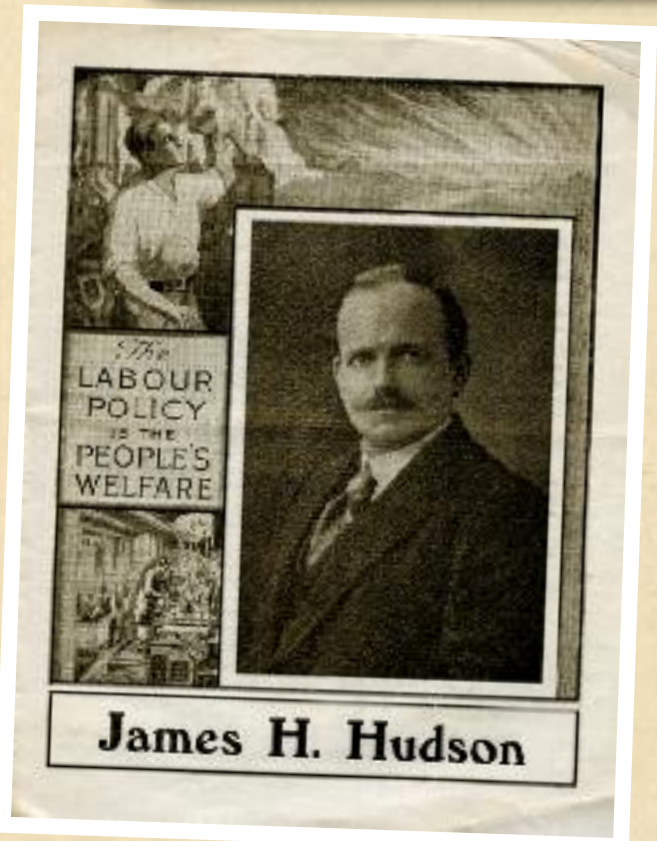
Suggested activities

In addition to the learning activities suggested on the previous pages, here are some more ideas to help pupils to engage with the materials about conscientious objectors.



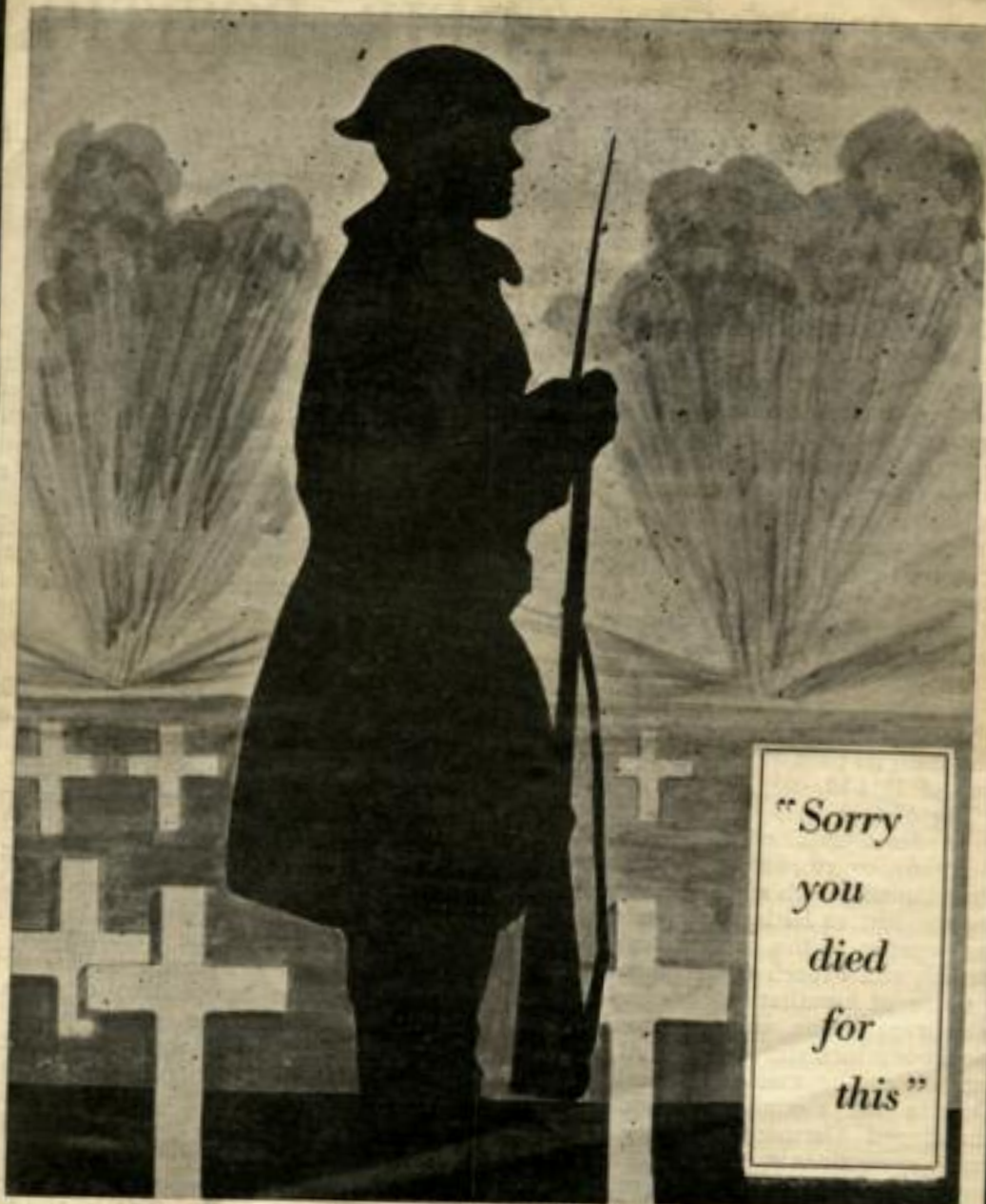
Produce a scene for a play about one of the stories of Salford conscientious objectors. There should be dialogue between at least two different characters, plus some stage directions (such as 'he shakes his head' or 'angrily'). Examples could be the exchange between the magistrate and Harry Davies, the raid on the offices of the 'Labour Leader' or a moment when Elder and Beresford arrive at a house on their bicycles seeking shelter for the night and talk to the houseowner who may not agree with them.

Write an obituary of James Hudson, which could have appeared in a local paper shortly after he died in January 1962. Include details of the main things for which he will be remembered and some positive things that people said about him (you can also make up some things that people might have said about him).



Look at the stories of all the Salford conscientious objectors (on pages 3, 4, 5 and 7). If you had to choose just one of these for their life story to be made into a film, which one would you choose and why? Also, if there was enough money for Salford Council to produce a statue to celebrate the life of one of these people, who would that be? If you have chosen a different person for the film and the statue, explain why.

"See you soon, Dad"



*"Sorry
you
died
for
this"*

**END THE WAR
BY A REAL PEACE**

ONE PENNY

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