

## Conscientious objectors in WW1

When the UK government introduced conscription in 1916 it also made it possible for certain groups of men not to fight, through the operation of Local Tribunals - the only country in WW1 to introduce exceptions to conscription. One of the categories for which men could be exempted from military service was conscientious objection. Over 60 Titchfield men were exempted from military service on other grounds as shown in the records of the Local Tribunal. None, however, was a conscientious objector. One family in Conisbrough did have a conscientious objector, Bert Brocklesby, two of whose brothers enlisted.

Bert's father was a lay preacher and magistrate who did not agree with his son's views but supported him nevertheless. Bert was a staunch Methodist, trained as a teacher at the Methodist College in London, taught in an elementary school in Conisbrough and was an organist and choir master for his chapel. Bert was an absolutist in that he would not fight nor would he join the Non-Combatant corps. His appeal to be exempted was rejected and he was held in Richmond Castle before being taken to France and threatened with a firing squad.

*We will not fight* skilfully weaves the story of Bert Brocklesby with the political background showing how the government and the military coped with conscientious objectors. *We will not fight* was published in 2008 by Aurum Press. Drawings on cell walls in Richmond Castle, done by Bert and fellow prisoners, feature in *Our painted past* published by English Heritage in 1999

