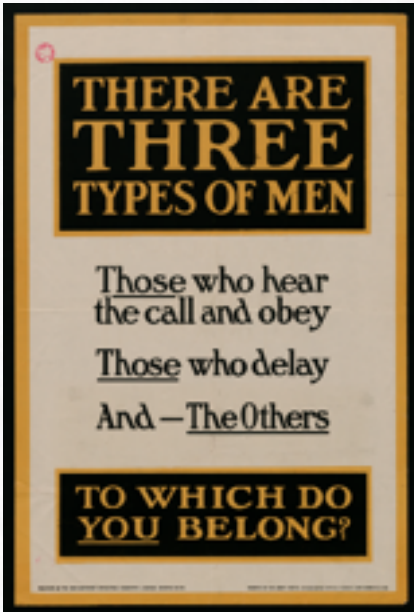


CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS



Military Service Act 1916

JANUARY 1916

Under the terms of this act that came to force in March 1916 men between the ages of 18 and 41 could be called-up for military service unless they were married, widowed with children or ministers of religion.

MAY 1916

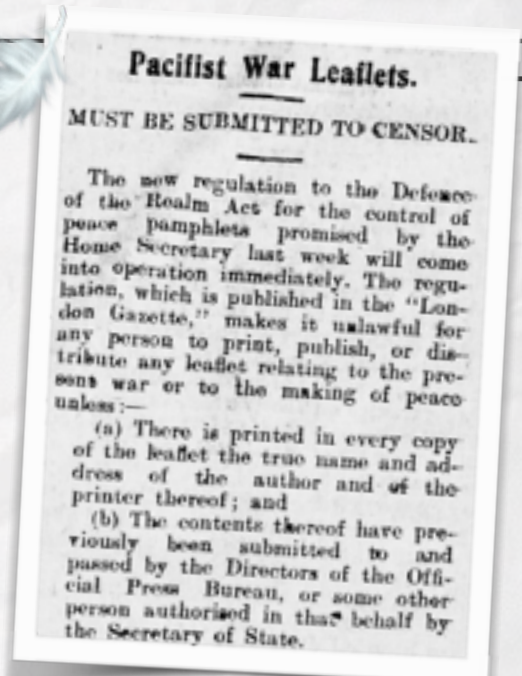
The act was amended so that married men could also be called-up

Only **key workers** who were employed in reserved occupations such as mining, munitions, and farming were exempt from this act.

Many men known as conscientious objectors refused to join the armed forces for moral, religious or political reasons. They argued that their conscience did not allow them to kill their fellow human beings.

The derogatory term **conchie** was used to describe them and many people who had family members in the armed forces felt bitter and resentful towards conscientious objectors. They were often treated as outcasts and many were given a white feather, a traditional symbol for cowardice. They also experienced other forms of harassment and were labelled as traitors by some newspapers.

Government tribunals were used to decide who they thought were genuine conscientious objectors.



Llais Llafur, November 24, 1917

There were many different types of conscientious objectors, including:

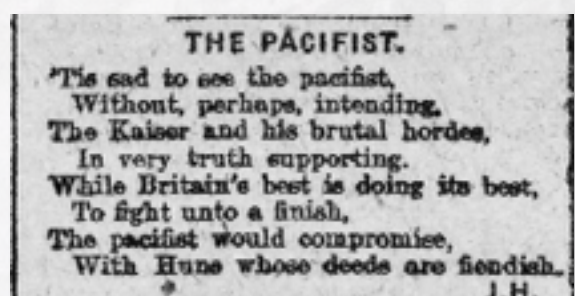


- Men who were willing to join the war effort but would not take part in the fighting. Some of these worked as ambulance drivers in the Friends Ambulance Unit or Red Cross, or as messengers on the fighting front, while others worked in munitions factories or on farms.

- Absolutists who refused to make any contribution to the war effort. They refused to take part in the fighting or work on the home front, and many faced harsh punishments and were imprisoned.

- Many conscientious objectors were not released from prison until **1919** and were refused the right to vote until five years after the end of the war.

A poem criticising conscientious objectors



The Cambria Daily Leader, January 16, 1917

BERTRAND RUSSELL

1872-1970



Bertrand Russell was born in Trelleck, Monmouthshire, Wales and was a grandson of Lord John Russell who was prime minister of Britain during the Victorian era.

Bertrand Russell was a talented man in many fields including philosophy, history, and mathematics and was a lecturer in Mathematics at Cambridge University.

He won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1950 and during his life won acclaim as a peace campaigner and as a political campaigner.

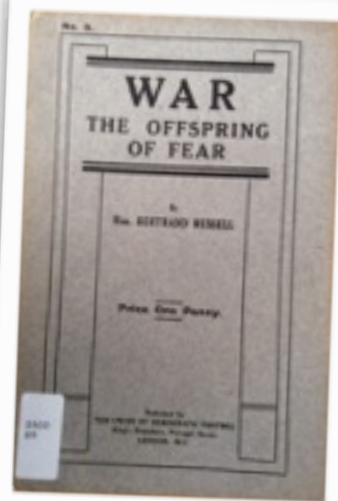
1890 accepted at Cambridge to study Mathematics

1910 was appointed as Mathematics lecturer at Cambridge University.

1910-13 published three volumes of *Principia Mathematica* which discussed the reasoning behind mathematical ideas.

1916 lost his job at Cambridge University because of offences he had committed under the the Defence of the Realm Act 1914. He was sentenced for being involved in pacifist activities.

He was fined £100 for these activities and his books were sold by Cambridge Police in an auction to pay the fine.



Pamphlet containing Bertrand Russell's views on war. It was published between 1914-15.

1918 imprisoned at Brixton because of his outspoken views against the USA's entry into the war as an ally of Britain.

After the Second World War he became involved in the campaign for nuclear disarmament.

1950/60s protested against the Vietnam War and established an organisation to investigate the role of the USA in Vietnam.

The intrinsic evils of war are so great and so obvious that it is hard to understand how men can treat them so lightly as they do. The Black Death and the Plague of London are always spoken of as national misfortunes; I cannot see why a similar destruction of human life should cease to be a misfortune when it is inflicted deliberately by the will of man...Enemy soldiers, as much as our own, have mothers who mourn when they are killed...

The Philosophy of Pacifism

Peace and Freedom Pamphlets, Bertrand Russell



One of Wales' most prominent pacifists during the first half of the twentieth century was George Maitland Lloyd Davies.

He was born in Liverpool and was the son of a tea merchant and a grandson to John Jones, Talysarn a famous Welsh preacher.

His Christian faith was central to his pacifism as he believed that wars were immoral and uncivilised. He was imprisoned many times in Wormwood Scrubs, London and at Winson Green, Birmingham because of his opposition to the First World War and military compulsion.

MR GEORGE DAVIES

ACCUSED OF BEING ABSENT FROM THE ARMY

In Bangor Magistrates Court Lieutenant Hughes brought a charge against Mr George M.L.I. Davies, Tynymaes, Bethesda, of being absent from military service.

Lieutenant Hughes said Mr Davies was given permission for exemption from the Central Tribunal because he was a conscientious objector, on the basis that he undertook work of national importance. He was given work of this nature at Moelfra Fawr, Llanaelhaiarn... In September he made a request to the Central Tribunal for a total exemption which would give him total freedom in his movements and vocations...

Y Dinesydd Cymreig, 12 December, 1917

1913 - Left his job as the manager of the *Bank of Liverpool*, Wrexham branch

1914 - With his friend Richard Roberts from Blaenau Ffestiniog he established a Christian society to promote peace called the Fellowship of Reconciliation (*Cymdeithas y Cymod*).

1916 - Military Service Act is passed. Announces that he is a conscientious objector and faces numerous tribunals to defend his beliefs.

1926 - Ordained as a religious minister with the Welsh Methodists and given a post in Meirionethshire, north Wales.

1937 - the Welsh National Pacifist Society is established with G.M.LL Davies as its President and Gwynfor Evans as Secretary.

During the Depression of the 1930s he worked as a minister in the poverty stricken areas of south Wales and retired in 1946.

The Fellowship of Reconciliation consists of people united by their common conviction that Jesus Christ is the answer to all the complicated civilisation problems of our time. The Society was formed by about 130 people who gathered in Cambridge during the last four days of 1914."

Translation of the opening words of the society's leaflet, 'Cymdeithas y Cymod - Ei Sylfeini, Cyfres Newydd Rhif 1', Caernarfon.



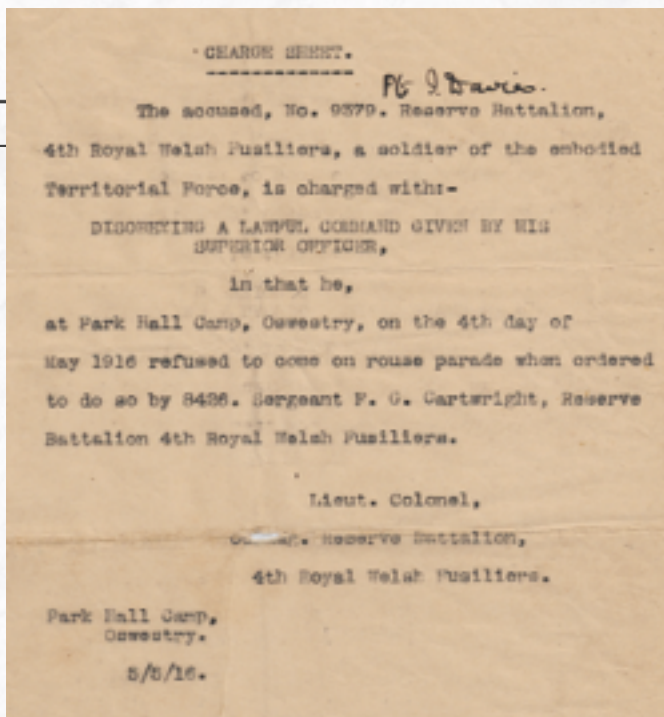
ITHEL DAVIES

1894-1989

Ithel Davies was born in Aberystwyth. He was a qualified barrister and became a prominent political activist after the Second World War.

He was conscripted into the army in 1916 but refused to take military orders. When he was imprisoned as a conscientious objector between 1916 and 1919 he regularly wrote to his parents Benjamin and Anne Davies and his brother Goronwy, who lived at Glan-yr-afon, Cwm Tafolog, Montgomeryshire. As an absolutist he experienced harsh treatment. He was given detentions, hard labour, faced Military Courts and was sentenced to imprisonment numerous times during the war.

He stood as the candidate for the Welsh Republican Movement in the Ogwr constituency in the General Election of 1951.



Document showing the reasons why he went before a Military Court in 1916.



Llangollen Advertiser
July 28, 1916

GWENALLT

1899-1968



The poet Gwenallt (David James Jones) was born in Pontardawe and spent his childhood in Alltwen, in the Swansea Valley. He went to the University of Wales, Aberystwyth after the First World War, and became a teacher and lecturer at Aberystwyth University.

He was imprisoned for periods in Wormwood Scrubs and Dartmoor prisons during the First World War because he was a Christian conscientious objector and 'for refusing to wear khaki clothes'.

He wrote about his experiences as a prisoner in his novel *Plasau'r Brenin* published in 1934.

T.E NICHOLAS (NICLAS Y GLAIS)

1879-1971



One of Wales' most prominent pacifists during the First World War was Thomas Evan Nicholas, or Niclas y Glais, which was his bardic name. He was born into a farming family in 1879 in north Pembrokeshire and was one of five children. He was nicknamed Niclas y Glais after he became minister in Seion Chapel, Glais, in Cwm Tawe in May 1904.

During the time he spent in the Tawe valley he became friendly with Keir Hardie, the Member of Parliament for the Independent Labour Party in Merthyr.

He was asked by Keir Hardie to be the Welsh editor on *The Merthyr Pioneer*, which was a newspaper that supported the Independent Labour Party.



During his life T.E Nicholas had worked in many jobs e.g in a tavern, in a grocer's shop, as a dentist and minister of religion.

1914 - He became a minister in the Llangybi and Llanddewi Brefi areas of Ceredigion

1918 - Established a branch of the Labour Party in Ceredigion. Resigned from his job as a religious minister in a chapel and started practising as a dentist in Pontardawe.

1920 - Came to prominence during the First World War as a Socialist and by 1920 had joined the Communist Party.

1921 - Moved to Aberystwyth with his wife and son and established a dental practice in the town.

1940 - Was imprisoned at Swansea and Brixton because of his political views.

1971 - Died at his home in Aberystwyth

He was a poet, socialist, pacifist and revolutionary who distinguished himself as one of the best orators in the Welsh language on issues such as socialism, peace, equality, the nationalisation of land and a Parliament for Wales.



Niclas y Glais was a political conscientious objector. He used his job as the editor of *The Merthyr Pioneer* during the war to argue that the war was immoral and uncivilised.

As a Socialist he believed in peace and equality for everybody in society. He thought that Britain should not be involved in the First World War. Socialists argued against becoming involved in a war where they would be fighting their fellow workers in other countries.

'*Canu'r Carchar*' - a collection of poems in Welsh written by T.E. Nicholas while in Swansea and Brixton prisons