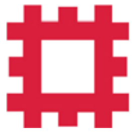

SPEAKING WITH SHADOWS

Transcript of Episode 4: Voices from the Walls – Richmond Castle's Conscientious Objectors

Josie: Today I'm at Richmond Castle, just south of Darlington in North Yorkshire, to hear a story that's barely a century old: a little talked about piece of England's history, but still taking shape thanks to brand new research, painstaking conservation work and the descendants of those involved.

Right now I'm standing under the castle's towering keep and it is imposing! It was designed to be seen. It's got four sky-high walls of utterly impenetrable rock – it might as well be saying 'Put down your pitchfork and pay me your taxes you peasant!' But it's what's inside those walls that I'm really interested in.

I'm seeking out the cell block within the castle grounds to track down the voices of those who couldn't shout from the ramparts. Personal messages, portraits of loved ones and even hymns were inscribed here by political prisoners, and they tell quite a story. These were people who faced a choice: go to war, or, if you didn't agree, you could face court martial, detention and even the death sentence for your beliefs. If it wasn't for the very personal, tangible marks of the individuals that were held here, we might not have uncovered these stories at all. The government wanted the tribunal records destroyed. These are very nearly forgotten voices.

Today I'm walking in the footsteps of some of the 20,000 people who applied to be exempt from military service during the First World War on the grounds of conscientious objection. Thanks to the remarkable and profound graffiti, we've been able to piece together more about the lives of the Richmond Sixteen – a group who were sentenced to death for refusing to participate in the war. But we'll also hear about the discovery of an even lesser known story: that of a man named James Burchell, and Edith Ellis, the woman who helped him. This is a story about seemingly ordinary people from various walks of life – clerks, miners, teachers, carpenters – all united by the same belief: war was just plain wrong.

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Josie: So we've just arrived at the top of the keep in Richmond Castle and I'm here with Dr Megan Leyland. We just climbed 33 metres!

Megan: Yeah, it's quite a few stairs, but it's worth it when you get to the top.

Josie: And the views are splendid! You can see the river Swale and the hills in the distance.

Megan: Yes.

Josie: We're here to talk about something that you're really interested in, aren't we?

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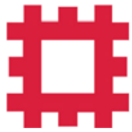

Megan. Yes. So as a historian, I love social history and learning about people – things we can relate to about past lives. And a lot of my job is snooping and detective work. We have these wonderful buildings that we go around, and I have the pleasure of going and looking into archives and looking at the buildings and what they tell us – finding those letters which no one's touched potentially for hundreds of years, or reading someone's diary which perhaps no one was ever supposed to, but they put it in an archive, which is great for me.

Josie: What a dream! That's a dream! The things you must have found out.

Megan: Well, it's been a really, really exciting research project because we've been looking into an aspect of the history which perhaps people don't expect to find here. Richmond Castle is known as a great example of 11th-century building, built in the years after the Norman Conquest of 1066. It gradually fell into ruin and was revived again in the 19th century when it found a new purpose, and that was as the base and stores of the local militia.

But there's another story: during the First World War it became a base for the northern companies of the Non-Combatant Corps. And this was a military unit where conscientious objectors could come and support the war effort, but without using arms and without killing.

Josie: So it's part of a spectrum of objection. You've got people on one end who refuse to participate in any way, shape or form, and then you've got the Non-Combatant Corps, which is – I don't want to say a compromise – but it's sort of a path in the middle of that.

Megan: Yes, and belief was so personal and how far you would engage in different aspects of the war was very dependent on that belief. It was different for everybody. And some willingly joined the Non-Combatant Corps based here and they would undertake tasks – quite manual tasks, so maybe cleaning soldiers' billets, helping on farms, loading and unloading, and things like that – and that sat comfortably with their beliefs. But for a very small number, doing anything which supported the war effort in any way at all went against them, and these are quite often known as absolutist conscientious objectors – the far extreme at one end.

Josie: What was conscription? I am aware, you know, it stopped being voluntary and became obligatory. When did that happen and under what circumstances?

Megan: Conscription – compulsory military service as you said – was introduced in 1916. And it was two years after the war began – you had loads of casualties on the front, you had fewer people volunteering to fight, and so the British Army faced sort of a crisis in manpower. How are they going to have enough people to win this war? And after a lot of debate and conversation they introduced conscription.

Josie: And was it one of the first times that had been used wholesale? How did they even come up with it?

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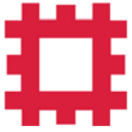

Megan: Conscription was new to Britain. It was the first time it had been fully introduced here.

Josie: It's so funny because it's an idea that I think people nowadays are at least familiar enough with that you have to stop and go, oh yes, this was introduced – this was sort of forced onto people.

Megan: And I think there'd been rumblings that it was coming – it was going to come and that it could happen. So you had anti-war groups forming which were prepared to fight against this conscription that they believed was wrong. So when conscription was introduced it really forced those who were opposed to the war to make a decision. Did they answer the call to arms, sign up and go and fight for their country, or did they face the consequences of what happened if they opposed? And fortunately you could apply for exemption from conscription on a number of grounds – ill-health, hardship, your occupation, and conscientious objection. So you'd have those who would refuse to parade, would refuse to wear uniform, would refuse to have their medicals taken, and would not follow an order. Whereas you have others who found a position where they felt comfortable in working, whether that was in a medical capacity – the Royal Army Medical Corps – or whether that was here at Richmond Castle in the Non-Combatant Corps.

The conscientious objectors who were imprisoned were those absolutists that we've talked about, and they would be imprisoned here after refusing to obey orders. They would be often in and out of the cells for short periods of detention – often 7 to 14 days seems to come up a lot in their accounts.

Josie: They're literally being medieval-style prisoners.

Megan: And I think it's amazing actually – you read some of the accounts and there's one conscientious objector who came here willingly and joined the Non-Combatant Corps. He wrote that he wondered what the walls would say if they could talk to us.

Josie: Ha!

Megan: What stories they would tell of great lords, which once frequented here – what stories they might tell of prisoners held here.

Josie: What's so apt about that is we're literally talking about the walls, and HIS story and the stories of conscientious objectors as written in the graffiti downstairs.

Megan: Yes! So you can't see the building we're going to be going in quite yet from our vantage point. So many visitors who pass through would probably not even give it a second glance. But housed inside it is just a remarkable record which tells the stories of those conscientious objectors who refused to recognise their enlistment in the Non-Combatant Corps, who refused to do anything they were ordered to, and who refused to do anything that would compromise their beliefs and would contribute to the war, which they believed was fundamentally wrong.

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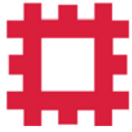

Josie: Wow.

Megan: So we're going to head back down all those stairs to a rather unassuming looking building alongside the keep – the cell block. And there we're going to meet Kevin Booth, senior curator for English Heritage, who's going to tell us a little bit more about some of the work we've been doing there.

Josie: Down the stairs is much easier than up!

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Josie: So that's the sound of the cell block door opening and we're going into the building. Oh, wow, even just feeling the door open you're hit by the smell of it. And there's over 2,000 pieces of graffiti in this cell block.

Megan. Yes. So the building was constructed in the mid-19th century, and we have graffiti here which ranges in date we think from the late 19th century all the way through to the 1970s. And you can see just how much there is of it. You're welcome to go in one of the cells and have a little look.

Josie: Wow! There's graffiti that says: 'Socialism. The worker's only salvation', but then somebody's crossed out 'socialism' and written: 'No my lad. Worrrk!!' So you can also see that there's this very charged discourse.

Megan: It's one of the great things about graffiti that it can respond to each other over time. People can have conversations. And people who possibly have never met can have conversations on the wall.

Josie: And there's something very thrilling about the fact that we're looking at pencil writing from over a hundred years ago.

Hi Kevin. It's really nice to meet you. I'm a little bit overawed by this room. It's so full of life!

Kevin: Hello. It's so full of people isn't it? It absolutely resonates with personal experience, really.

Josie: Why can't the public come into these rooms at the moment?

Kevin: It's just too fragile, simply too fragile. I mean it's a miracle that most of this is still here, full stop. You know a hundred years on from when the conscientious objectors are recording –

Josie: It's pencil marking!

Kevin: It's pencil, and it's scratched, and it's limewash, and limewash just wants to fall off the wall. That's all it wants to do, and in many places – you can look at this end wall here. You can see how much we've lost. And that will have been scattered with graffiti.

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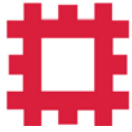
ENGLISH HERITAGE

Josie: Of course!

Kevin: And it's a huge range of sentiment – from really very, very personal, very heartfelt, to a lot more playful, to simply just recording the fact that you were here.

Josie: Yeah, you've got this beautiful drawing of someone's fiancée as well.

Kevin: This is Annie Wainwright. And she was the fiancée of one of the key people of this story, Bert Brocklesby, one of the Richmond Sixteen. But you see how someone's appropriated her later on and called her Kathleen? So 'This is my Kathleen'. And then other people – here, here, here – have tried to draw Kathleen, and got a bit embarrassed by the fact that they failed, and they've scrubbed it out with their fist or they've just left it half done and decided to quietly walk away.

Megan: And this is a great graffiti actually to talk about because, as Kevin says, it's one of the ones that we actually know quite a bit about, and one when we started our research that we knew something about the story it related to. And Brocklesby, as you see, seems to be quite a talented artist, and there's a few inscriptions within this one cell which he drew himself. And we know a bit about his life before the war. He was a schoolteacher in Conisbrough in South Yorkshire –

Josie: Oh, it says here as well, he's written that he went to Westminster Training College between 1907 and 1909. He's really helped you guys out, hasn't he?

Megan: Sometimes it's lovely – they pop their names, they pop their addresses. And with the miracle of research, now you can pop that into a database and actually find out quite a lot about these people. And we know that he became engaged to Annie prior to the war. And their engagement lasted the war, but afterwards they never got married in the end.

Josie: Oh, what intrigue!

Kevin: Annie actually went on to run a guest house on the south-east coast – quite an indomitable character by all accounts.

Josie: She had her own dreams!

Megan: There's some hints here about what life was like for these men at the castle. And it tracks his journey. So: left Conisbrough – which was his home where he was a teacher; arrived in Pontefract Barracks; and then he arrived at Richmond. And you can see him coming in and out of these cells as he disobeyed orders, was put back in for punishment and detention, and then went out and back in again. And even '48 hours B+W' – on bread and water punishment diet.

I'm going to take you through into the next cell where we can discover what happened to these 16 men after they left Richmond.

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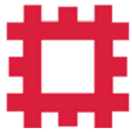

This one here: rather unassuming – it's not a beautiful sketch like some of the others we've seen already. It's been written by Clarence Hall: 'seven days' detention'; and then the bit which is really important to our story, which marks a real moment for those men held here: 'sent to France'. The Sixteen who were held here – some were held in the cells, some were held in the guardroom in the keep – were taken from Richmond and sent to France. So sent into the theatre of war. And when you're in active service, for refusing to obey orders, which these men were already, you could potentially face capital punishment.

So they went to France. They continued to disobey orders. They were court martialled. And then there was a rather dramatic moment where their sentences were read out. The sentence was read – sentenced to death. Short pause: reduced to ten years' hard labour.

So it was a really important moment, because it showed both how far the military was prepared to go and how far conscientious objectors were prepared to go to stand by their beliefs. And they really did put their lives on the line. And they came back to England and faced prison sentences – hard labour – and weren't released until 1919.

Josie: Why do you think it's important to tell these stories now?

Kevin: It really resonated in 2016, which was a hundred years since the Richmond Sixteen had been imprisoned in here. So that really kick-started a new sense of interest – I mean broad, global public interest in these individuals and in the acts, their actions, which did lead to real sort of great change in the way people's rights and freedoms were understood after the war had finished. So, you know, just that subset of graffiti in amongst the two and a half thousand that are in here are internationally important. These are the first strides made after the first time any country had introduced the idea of conscientious objection. These are the first strides made to combat that.

Josie: The Richmond Sixteen weren't the only conscientious objectors here, were they?

Megan: No, as you can see there are loads of graffiti all over the walls and they only account for a handful of the inscriptions. And so conscientious objectors were sent here in their hundreds. We don't quite know how many ended up in the cells but each one of these tells fascinating little stories and sometimes big stories.

Josie: This is so serious, and so inspiring, and still underneath it, someone has drawn a pair of boobs – because you cannot suppress the desire to do some naughty graffiti.

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Josie: Research into the Richmond Sixteen was full of surprises. Not only does the research give us an insight into the identities and the lives of the individuals, but they've inspired others to come forward with wonderful stories. Ruth Ecuyer was one of these people.

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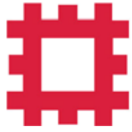


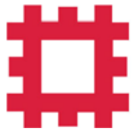
Ruth: It just so happened in 2007, with my brother and my husband, we were going up to Teesdale for a short holiday. About lunchtime we got to Richmond, which we didn't really know at all, but we came across the barracks. And the door was open, and I saw some writing on the wall, which said 'prison cells', but it was the conscientious objectors which made me suddenly realise: Goodness me! This is something that concerns me because I had grown up with a conscientious objector as a father.

And as we were wandering along looking at this, I suddenly came across this signature. And it said 'John H. Brocklesby'. And all of a sudden the lights went on in my brain, because this was the very man who had written a wedding march for me!

In 1962 I was to get married to my Swiss-French husband and we were to have a wedding blessing in the Methodist church in Muswell Hill, north London. My mother was organising this but she wanted me to choose the music for this occasion. And so I asked Alfred William Evans, and he was my Uncle Alf. He was a piano tuner and very involved in music, loved music of all kinds. And so I asked him if he knew of a wedding march other than the ubiquitous Mendelssohn and Wagner, which I did not like at all. Unbeknown to me, he got in touch with his very dear friend John H. Brocklesby, the most fantastic organist and musician. And lo and behold Brocklesby, who was, unbeknown to me at the time, in the last months of his life, actually wrote a wedding march for me! He sent this to my parents and included a letter to my father:

> Dear friend,
>
> My old friend and companion in troubles during World War I, Alfred Evans, thinks I ought to remember you but I must confess that my memory is a bit vague. I hope you will forgive this. However, when Alfred said your daughter wished for a change from the eternal Mendelssohn when her wedding is celebrated, and could I recommend anything, I had to confess that I knew of no serviceable alternative. So under the circumstances, I made the bold reserve of writing a march myself.
> I cannot profess to compete with the great Felix, but the accompanying music is, on my wife's testimony, a jolly piece. And what else is required?
> A wedding is not all triumphant. Some remember the breaking of one family that another may start; not all triumphant, but nevertheless all love, and love has its sadnesses at times.
> I pray God bless you all and may this music bring its blessing.
>
> Yours very sincerely,
>
> John H. Brocklesby

I saw the music and it was played by the organist at the church. And I remember thinking how beautiful it was, and how privileged I felt that somebody had actually – who didn't even know me – had actually



written a wedding march for me. And today this feeling is amplified incredibly, especially since I know that he died only a few months after doing so.

When I mentioned Megan had thought that the wedding march was worth recording again, my son, who is in the field of music, he said: 'Oh, I'll do that for you.' And so he has done this recording. I would love John Brocklesby to have been able to hear it. I think he'd be quite pleased, and Alf as well. So I hope we've done a good job, and that it is nice for people to hear, and they will hear what a deeply thinking man he was, because I think that comes over loud and clear. These men, who tried so hard and suffered so greatly to make their point for what they considered was a human right, should be celebrated, even if you don't agree with what they did.

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Josie: The Richmond Sixteen story is fascinating, and in the course of the extensive research into this, the team at English Heritage have come across another incredible story. James Burchell was another individual imprisoned here at Richmond, who during the war corresponded with his past employer, a pacifist Quaker named Edith Ellis, who was imprisoned herself for her involvement. I'm sitting here now with her great-niece Judith Ellis, along with volunteer researcher Carol Chappell. Carol, you uncovered something really unexpected when you were researching.

Carol: Yes, as part of the research project I chose a name from the cell walls.

Josie: So the name you found was James Burchell.

Carol: Yes, that's right, and he'd been in the cell from May to July. One of the links, really, in terms of where there might be some information was at the Quaker House – Quaker Library.

Josie: Oh, I know it well! It's a really calm place to get a cup of tea.

Carol: So Megan very kindly went to have a look to see what there was, and was amazed because in fact there must have been at least 14 letters written by him, mostly to Edith Ellis, and they contained lots of new information about people being held in the cells.

Josie: I'm going to bring Judith into this. Edith exchanged letters with James Burchell. How did she know James Burchell? Who was he and what was their relationship?

Judith: Well, James Burchell was the gardener at Wrea Head. So Edith remained in the house, Wrea Head. Burchell was an employee. I never heard about the letters until Carol arrived bringing me copies after her research. So I knew nothing, nothing of it at all. His name was James, but I always knew him as Burchell.

Josie: Did he continue to work at the house after the war?

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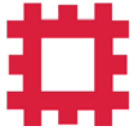

Judith: Yes, he did. Yes.

Josie: So there's this brief period where these people are these very intense political activists. And then they kind of go back – he goes back to being a gardener …

Judith: So whether he became a conscientious objector because he was working there and he was influenced by my great-aunt I have no idea.

Josie: She wasn't just this passive woman receiving letters, was she? She was part of that movement to object to the war.

Judith: It was a Quaker family, political. Her father was the Undersecretary of State in Campbell-Bannerman's government. So this is how they were brought up.

Josie: You've got pamphlets here, haven't you?

Judith: Yes, and the pamphlet is called 'A Challenge to Militarism'.

Josie: So what happened – were these censored? What's the story behind them?

Carol: They weren't. The problem was that actually the pamphlet didn't go to the government to be censored. And because it was sent out without that there was then the threat of imprisonment.

Josie: So at that time there was a system whereby if you wanted to publish something, it had to be OK'd by the government, censored and sent back to you?

Judith: Yes. But there were three of them, but the men went to prison for six months. Edith could have paid the fine, but she thought she'd stand with them and she was imprisoned in Holloway for three months, which must have been a terrible experience.

Josie: Oh definitely – the fact that she was that brave to say no, I'm not going to just pay this off, I'm going to … and I think there's something really interesting about the First World War and about this movement. It's that there's so much solidarity between different classes of people, between … it's not about where you are in society. It's about taking a stand and about …

Judith: Yes, but this was very much to do with the Society of Friends and Quakerism.

Josie: And is that something that your family's still a part of and is still relevant to you?

Judith: I admire Quaker ethos.

Josie: Me too, so much.

Judith: Yes. I am anti-war and I admire anybody who stands up for something that they believe in.

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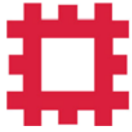


Josie: Definitely. And Carol, I want to ask you a little bit about Burchell himself. How are they getting the letters out, and what was going on? So they weren't really supposed to get any letters out?

Carol: They weren't, no, they weren't supposed to get letters out, and he wrote very early on he was in periods of detention when there wouldn't actually be any writing materials. But whenever he could he obviously managed. That also must mean that there were people looking after them in the cells that did allow this to happen. That's the point, isn't it, really?

Josie: Yeah. Why was it so significant when you discovered these letters?

Carol: Because they contained a lot of information about being in the cell block that we hadn't had before. He did write very comprehensive information about literally how big the cells were. He described some – he gives a physical description and says actually length and height about 9 to 10 feet and 6 feet across; stone flags for the floor and no heating; bed boards were used at night but taken away during the day.

Josie: That's so useful! It's like he knew you were coming!

Carol: And then he talks about the people that were actually in the cells and how he tried to support them and he can, you know, he kept smiling, but he also talks about the guards as well and about the sort of differences and things that he was made to do.

Josie: Why was Edith so essential to Burchell when he was in prison?

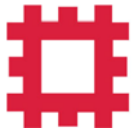
Carol: Very soon after he was imprisoned he was visited by a local solicitor who consequently wrote to Edith confirming that Burchell was splendidly cheerful. And he also received a visit from Alfred Rowntree. So immediately you have the connections – they were giving support. They were sending a solicitor.

Josie: You can see that she's taking a kind of clear decision to be supportive in that way.

Judith: Yes, she would be supportive, because this was what her whole life was about. And towards the end of her – she did a lot of work for peace, but towards the end of her life she gave her home and all the contents to the community. But after the war it was used as a convalescent centre for conscientious objectors, and she did a lot to help train them for new employment after their release in 1919.

Josie: Wow, so she really did dedicate herself to that cause.

Judith: So it wasn't just this part of her life, but the whole of her life. Quakers had friends in high places. I mean there was a lot of pressure, and Edith's mother was a Rowntree, but Edith must be celebrated as a female activist, anti-war activist – and so often females' history just gets swept under the carpet. So it's very important that she's remembered.



Josie: And somebody who equally as much was prepared to be imprisoned for her views and her actions. She still took that big risk.

Judith: Absolutely, yes.

……………..

Josie: We know that some 20,000 people applied for exemption from service in the First World War on the grounds of conscientious objection. I'm going to meet up with Kevin and Megan again, who've got some objects which might help us understand a bit more.

Me and Kevin and Megan are in the museum above the castle and I'm so excited because in front of us are several artefacts that you've brought, and I'm wearing special blue forensic gloves. I mean, this is fantastic!

Kevin: It's just a few things out of the cases. It goes from devices used to really insult the conscientious objector to ways of trying to regain some of the ground and present them in a more positive light. So first of all, a lot of people listening will be familiar with the idea of the white feather.

Josie: Yeah, that's definitely the extent of what I learned I think in school about conscientious objection at all.

Kevin: So if you were seen to be a man of service age and you weren't wearing uniform, there's every chance that you are a conscientious objector and you're shirking your responsibilities, and you could be handed a white feather to mark you out as a coward to shame you publicly. So here we have one of those white feathers, and this one has been pinned to a sheet of paper which says – can you read that?

Josie: It says, 'For a coward who will not defend his country. Shame on you. Enlist now.' You can feel it coming off the page, can't you?

Kevin: There's venom in there, isn't there. Potentially this is the sort of thing that's actually been put through someone's door.

Megan: It would have been such an emotionally charged time, where you have people whose fathers, sons, brothers are potentially dying at the front, and men not fighting; and then you have men with a very different perspective and point of view and probably finding a way to relate your way to understanding that stance. You can begin to put yourselves in both shoes actually – to understand how challenging it would have been for society as a whole.

Kevin: I think so – and we know that for a lot of conscientious objectors their immediate communities actually could be very supportive. There was a whole sort of backroom staff of people who were supporting and enabling and defending the conscientious objectors. We've got a postcard here – there's a mass of postcards and cartoons and posters issued –

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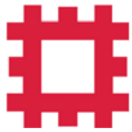

Josie: It's a culture war…

Kevin: Yeah, defaming the conscientious objector, using the language we've used: shirker, coward unpatriotic, unmanly. And this is a postcard issued in defence of the actions of the conscientious objector.

Josie: It's got all these different cartoons about what a man would go through as he did this. So there's a cartoon of how he feels when he's handed over to the military by the civil authority and he's in these giant hands; and then there's him addressing his court martial and he's looking like a saint and orating; and then how he feels when he finally gets his discharge and he's just this old guy.

So if you did oppose the war, what happened? How did you go about conscientiously objecting?

Megan: As with everything, it starts with paperwork. I'll just hand over here. You have these buff-coloured forms, which was your appeal not to undertake military service – your appeal for exemption from military service. And they're incredible documents because they say in those people's own words why they objected to the war. So you're looking at Burchell's right now, and the really interesting section is often this bit. It says 'reasons in support of the applications'. And in this, these conscientious objectors essentially had to write down why they were opposed to the war. You can imagine actually that's quite a hard thing to do, to put down in a paragraph or a few words why you cannot fight.

But you also had to explain them in front of a panel of people who had to decide whether your objection to the war was genuine or not. These are panels often composed of the good and great of local areas. They can be businessman, councillors. But at the end of hostilities, after the war, besides two representative samples that were going to be kept, all of these tribunal records were supposed to be destroyed. So it's very fortunate that some have survived to tell us about some of the men who were kept at Richmond.

Kevin: It's such an important thing to remember isn't it that these people who go through tribunal are being sent still to join the Army. They're classed as soldiers. Bert Brocklesby takes the train by himself to Darlington and walks the five miles to Richmond, perfectly of his own volition – he says in his memoir that he puts his cap on backwards as a sort of act of defiance walking through Darlington – and knocks on the castle gate! And says: 'I'm here. I've turned up.' And having done that, he then starts this protest against any action that he's asked to carry out.

Josie: And again, it's such a reminder of the articulacy and the education and the depth of thought of ordinary people. Just looking at this one – this is Alfred Martlew – and he's got these three reasons for objecting, and the second one is: 'I absolutely and emphatically deny the right of any government to call upon me as a citizen of the world to assist in the slaughter of my fellow men.' Number three: 'I'm convinced in my own mind of the complete futility, inefficacy and wastage of the war as a means of settling any kinds of quarrel or grievance existing among nations.'

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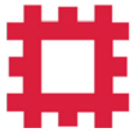

Kevin: It's well written. It's well balanced. It's thought through. Alfred Martlew is a man who's able to express himself in that way. You can imagine, of those 20,000 people who are putting themselves up for exemption, how many are as articulate?

Josie: So there's a lot more that you're going to be doing to help people to understand how complicated it was to be conscientious objector here, isn't there?

Megan: Yes, so if we think about some of the stories we've heard today, we've heard of a couple, a handful of people, and we've got just over 2,300 inscriptions in the cells. Each one of those represents a voice, a story, a moment. And we've been working with a wonderful group of volunteers who have been helping us unlock those stories, and I think we're up to something like 170 that we've now looked at, and we've found such richness. So the potential to still find out more – to find these stories which are so personally significant, but also link into local, national, international events – is immense.

Josie: Thank you so much for your time. And thank you so much for showing me these.

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Josie: Wow, I've had the most fascinating day. I can't believe it. Being in those cells was just absolutely overwhelming.

I think it can be really easy to look at a potted view of history and think that the lives and the decisions of people a hundred years ago would be much less complicated or much easier in some way, but it's such a reminder that we rarely see the full picture. Just seeing the diversity of opinion and objection – that generation was faced with such a difficult position. It was impossible for them not to do something incredibly difficult and incredibly brave like having to fight in the trenches. I mean no one can underestimate how difficult and how terrifying that must have been, but I think similarly these people who stood up for their principles when threatened with the death penalty, when facing the complete approbation of the society around them, it's astonishing.

The other thing that really strikes me is remembering when you study social history, remembering that people from every single background have their own complicated histories. Every single background, people were objecting in their own different intellectual, moral ways. And I think that's the thing that's so often forgotten – just how smart and complicated and educated people always have been.

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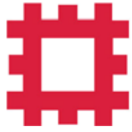

In our next main episode, I'm down on the south coast to hear about a queen who is a bit too powerful in the eyes of the king, and found herself locked up and accused of witchcraft.

> [clip] Most people have a very clear sense of what they think a witch is that derives mostly from places like children's literature and fantasy literature. That's a problem for historians because those ideas are very far removed from the reality of popular witch beliefs.

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I'm Josie Long, and you've been listening to Speaking with Shadows. See you next time.

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