

Steps Against War - Script (M Shed Walk)

Leaving the M Shed go right to the Cranes

1914. On Sunday 2nd August, Bristol dockers hold a mass meeting on the waterfront. In the last week, the dispute between Austria and Serbia has started to escalate into a major conflict between the imperial powers. Germany has declared war on Russia, and Britain is on the brink of entering the war.

At this moment of crisis, members of the Dockers union and their leaders meet in public to debate whether the union should support the drive to war, or not. Ernest Bevin, organiser for the dockers' union, speaks: He says that "English Trade Unionists are on the most friendly terms with Trade Unionists across the Continent. It would be insane to fight them simply because there is a dispute between Austria and Serbia" He proposes a resolution: that this meeting of organised workers calls on the Government to immediately declare its neutrality in connection with the European war; and on the TUC and the Labour Party to call a national conference to discuss ways to prevent this country from being involved in 'hostilities'

It is passed unanimously.

Later that day there is an anti-war demo on the Downs.

The next day, in emergency meetings, the National Union of Railway Women's Guild, and the Bristol branch of the National Union of Railwaymen also pass resolutions for peace - as they have no quarrel with their fellow workers on the continent.

The day after, 4th August, war is declared.

2000 Bristol building workers, who have been on strike for a month, refuse to call off the strike. Their employers have been arguing that if they were patriotic they'd go back to work without the payrise they want. They reply that if the bosses were patriotic they'd grant their demands. Eventually the bosses raise their offer: the builders accept it and return to work two weeks later.

There's been a lot of building going on - particularly in the place we're heading to. Bedminster has been expanding quickly, with a new area, Southville, being developed in the past ten years or so. Some of the war resisters we'll meet are builders and carpenters, and may well have helped to build it. Southville is just across the river from here.

Outside St Paul's Church - 'Bristol's Own' - soldiers banner

Kit: Banner, placards, puppet

People: 4 to hold banner, 1 puppeteer, 1 narrator

Action: As first half of banner unfurled - *At the outbreak of war in 1914 the 12th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment recruits in Bristol and becomes known as Bristol's Own. They are based at the White City in Ashton and on Sundays they march through Bedminster to go to church.* People hold up placards saying 'Hurray', puppet holds up placard saying 'Refuse to Kill!', others stare accusingly at puppet, puppet disappears. **Bravo Bristol begins** - Second half of banner is unfurled showing numbers killed. **Bravo Bristol with Counter melody** - as banner is rolled up.

We now have an eight minute walk through Southville. We would like you to follow the and please follow the directions from our stewards.

Walking along Dean Lane / Stackpool Road - recruiting and conscription posters displayed along the way

Outside St Thomas Mar Thoma Church on Stackpool Rd - Tribunal Paper Theatre

Kit: Frame on cart, paper puppets, photos/images about motivation

People: 2 puppeteers. +1 to hold up photos/images

When the Conscription Act is passed in 1916, all men of military age are deemed to be soldiers unless they can establish a claim before a Tribunal that they have grounds for exemption. Conscientious objectors can appeal to the Tribunal, to receive such exemption as, in the opinion of the Tribunal, they are entitled to.

Tribunals are often well attended by people who've come to support them. These may include people from the No Conscription Fellowship, the Independent Labour Party, Womens' Labour League, Socialist Labour party; anarchists, Quakers, and priests - as well as the generally curious and opinionated.

Tribunal appears in frame.

Military Representative First verse of song played **Show picture of man with wooden legs**

The Muckemdyke Tribunal sat in state the other day

To give or else refuse exemptions in the usual way

The first case was a man who'd had a wooden leg from birth

The chairman said "Exempted, now hop home for all you're worth!"

But the military representative got up and shouted "Bosch - a wooden leg - By Gosh!

Such tales will never wash!

It was our gallant hearts of oak that beat the foreign foe

A mahogany leg can do the same - of course he's got to go!

First puppet (brown jacket and grey trousers) placed on cart. Gestures

George Abraham Smith, a carpenter, living at 68 Greville Road. He is a Union man, a member of the Amalgamated Society of Carpenter and Joiners. Show picture of Union banner

He says: 'I will not obey any military order. I would rather die.' The Tribunal refuse him exemption.

Puppet taken off.

Military Representative 2nd verse of song played **Show picture of coffin**

They called upon the next case/ Then a woman rose and said/

I'm very sorry gentlemen/ But my poor husband's dead/

The chairman said "Well he's exempt, he needn't come again."/

"Oh, thank you." said the widow and she ran to catch her train

But the military representative got up and shouted "Hi!!

How dare your husband die! / He was A1 in July

What say ma'am? He's in heaven now? Well you just let him know

I'm sending a Sergeant to fetch him back. For of course he's got to go!"

2nd Puppet (short coat) placed on Cart and gestures

Alfred George Harris of 252 St John's Lane. A Quaker and member of the Bedminster Meeting of the Society of Friends. He claims absolute exemption on grounds of his faith.

Show VAD poster *The Tribunal decides that he should have exemption from combatant service conditional on him joining the Voluntary Aid Detachment giving medical and other support.*

Puppet taken off.

Third puppet placed on cart and gestures

Abram Coburg, a tailor, living and working at 152 East Street. He is Jewish and cites his faith as a reason why he won't fight and also appeals on grounds of hardship. The decision of the Tribunal is not known. Abram's brother, Henry does go to fight and is killed in 1917 in Flanders.

Puppet taken off

Military Representative 3rd verse of song played - Conscientious Objector **Show cartoon of Tribunal**

The next case was a long haired youth with pale and pimply face

He leaned upon the table with an attitude of grace

He lisped, "Dear friends, while I abhor the very thought of strife

I conscientiously object to taking human life"

But the military representative got up and shouted "Hey!

What's that I hear you say? Your conscience? Get away!

That you object to taking human life, haha, hoho!

But you can't call Germans humans dammit, of course you've got to go!

4th Puppet placed on cart and gestures

William Borthwick Livingston, a clerk from 45 Vicarage Road in Southville. After nearly two years on the run he has finally been caught and appears before the Central Tribunal at Wormwood Scrubbs. He cites his time at Socialist Sunday School as his inspiration for refusing to fight.

Show picture of Socialist Sunday School. Sing the **Red Flag** in high childish voices - la la

William is offered a place on a work camp but refuses. Pause for hand gesture. *He serves time in Horfield Prison with hard labour.*

Puppet taken off - pack up

Instrumental from Military Representative

We'll be finding out more about what William got up to when he was on the run.

Walk down Stackpool Road and then Vicarage Road. Image of Livingstons as we pass No. 45. **Cross over to the corner of Greville Road.**

Crankie of William Livingston on the run

Kit: Crankie on cart, captions, card puppets

People: 2 puppeteers, 1 to crank, 1 narrator

At the bottom of the hill you can see the Imperial Tobacco factory. This was a big employer in the area: a few of our CO's are tobacco workers, as are some of their sisters. Unlike many parts of the country, there isn't a shortage of tobacco here during the war. Quite a few women are taking up smoking, making use of their new disposable income from their own work, or from their soldier husbands' pay.

Some of our CO's live on this street: over there at No.45.

Action: Crankie shows 45 Vicarage Road, **caption 1 'The Livingstons' home in Southville'** displayed. *This family has four brothers of military age - they are all resisting conscription.* Three brothers displayed. *Alex and Charles are box makers, John the youngest is a general labourer, and William is a clerk....but where is William?*

William and his friend William Wall (also a clerk) have gone on the run. Crankie moves on - two figures on the run shown - **Caption 2: 'Somewhere in Scotland' displayed** when at cottage. Crankie moves on - Two figures join others at the camp fire. *The two Billys have joined other war resisters who are camping out in the hills.*

They are discovered - two are arrested but the other's run for it. **Caption 3 'Up hill and down hill'** displayed. Crankie moves on - police chase the three up hill, single figure tumbles down steep slope. Crankie rolls on. Police catch up with the fugitives. **Caption 4: 'You're nicked!'** displayed. This is used to cover the exchange of running figures for walking, handcuffed figures.

As they are marched to the police station & court they sing. **Red Flag**

Crankie moves onto Court building. **Caption 5 displayed: 'Sheriff's Court Kirkudbright'.** This covers fugitives entering court building.

In court, they are charged with encamping on a farm without permission - they plead guilty and are sent down. pause *They are imprisoned for 14 days*

Caption 6 displayed: 'On the run again'. Two figures shown leaving cell.

We lose track of William Livingston for the next two years... Two figures shown creeping over the top of the frame.

...until he is arrested in Axbridge for trespassing. This time he is handed over to the Military as a deserter and is imprisoned. Puppet shown in cell.

While puppets packed away:

Some of the runaways in Scotland are a group of anarchist friends from London. While still on the run, one of them writes an article for the anarchist paper Voice of Labour, with the title Defying the Act - "A number of comrades from all parts of Britain have banded themselves together in the Highlands the better to resist the working of the Military Service Act"... Lilian Woolf and Tom Keell, who are running the paper in London, print the article as a leaflet with a run of 10,000. They are jailed under the Defence of the Realm Act for distributing a leaflet which could prejudice recruiting.

We'll head round the corner now, to another address close by.

Walk round the corner to the home of George Abraham Smith at 64

Outside his home, police and paper theatre puppet of George -

This house, 64 Greville Road, is the home of George Abraham Smith. Paper puppet of Smith appears in frame. *He's a carpenter, and a union man - and is strongly opposed to joining the military, or obeying their orders. He is arrested at his home by...* (Detective Woods and policeman appear to either side of Smith) *Detective Woods. We'll be seeing him a few times on the walk, as he's been very busy since conscription began.*

The Police song - Smith puppet arrested by policeman

We now have a five minute walk to North Street, one of the three main streets in Bedminster

Walking down Greville Road to North Street - Flip chart about Sidney Vicary Vowles at 204 North St
cross North Street walk to Spotted Cow

Spotted Cow - Lloyd George's Beer Cantastoria

Temperance peaks at this time, after Lloyd George (Prime Minister 1916–22) famously proclaims that Britain is at war with Germany, Austria and drink, "and the greatest of these three deadly foes is drink". Beer is watered down, pub hours are slashed and beer duty soars. Lloyd George wants to introduce an outright prohibition, but his advisers point out that the banning of vodka in Russia had been a flashpoint for the Bolshevik revolution.

Play Lloyd George's Beer song

Walking along North Street - Flip Chart Ernest Roe at 123

Outside Gaywood House - Telephone Box - Table top puppets Defiant Deserter

As well as those who applied as CO's, there were many more men who didn't want to fight. The Police Gazette lists 80,000 men nationally as missing from military service at any one time.

November 1917. George Henry Wilkins, nineteen, has been missing from the army since July. The military call frequently on his mother, Alice Harver, a postie, at her house in Bedminster Down. But there's no sign of George - until today.

Illustrated Police Gazette November 29, 1917 Defiant Deserter: Mother Helps her Son to Defy the Police at Bristol

Detective Woods stated that, in company with PC Dempsey, he went to Bedminster Down Road, and saw the female defendant, and asked where Wilkins was. She replied that she had not seen him for about three months. Woods proceeded to search the house, and heard PC Dempsey shout. He rushed round to the front, but Harver slammed the door in his face. Dempsey rushed after Wilkins, who climbed through a back bedroom out onto the roof. The mother followed.

George and Alice climb up from behind cart. Look down and gesture at police. Talk to each other. Start picking up bricks.

They kept the police at bay for about two hours.

George and Alice throw bricks at police

Eventually a fire escape was obtained, and the prisoners were arrested.

George and Alice taken off cart and put away, while text below is read.

Detective Woods stated that the police had visited the house regularly in search of this man. Some years previously they traced a naval deserter to her house, and the man was eventually found lying under a mattress on which a baby was sleeping.

The magistrates remarked that the woman had apparently done all she could to evade law and order. She would go to prison for three months. The son was handed over to a military escort.

We will shortly be passing 63 North Street where Walter Told has his bike shop. Walter has assisted George Barker, another bicycle shop owner, in creating an underground chamber to hide men on the run.

In 1917 he is on the run himself. He cycles off to London but on the way is arrested in Reading after being tricked by a secret policeman. In court he is described as: "an associate of men of advanced views detrimental to the carrying on of the war."

Walk along North Street - Flip Chart about Walter Told arrow to indicate the shop across the road.

Flip Chart with Gilbert Silverthorne boot shop at 53 - look at artwork in window

When we are in the pocket park

*Boots and shoes were made locally. There were many cobblers in Bedminster.***

Gilbert Silverthorne (born 1890) lived at 53 North St - which we just passed. He and his father Ebenezer made and sold boots and shoes. Gilbert was a Conscientious Objector. He was a Christadelphian, a Christian sect founded in the 19th century

Based on their understanding of the Bible, Christadelphians refused to fight 'worldly' wars. They also refused to serve as non-combatants eg making munitions, serving in the medical corps etc.

Behind this park is the churchyard of the Ebenezer Methodist Chapel. Several of the grave stones are for Silverthornes - perhaps they are relations of Gilbert. Ernest Rudman, who we'll meet shortly, is a methodist, and may go to church there.

Pocket Park - Court Martial and punishment - Rod Puppets

Kit: Rod puppets and cart

People: 4 puppeteers and helpers

Action

*It is November 1916, 3 Bedminster men are arrested for failing to report for duty. Each puppet is introduced to the audience. First Frank on his own. **They are Frank Pope, a leather roller who lives at 74 Beaufort Road.** Then the two others. **Two close friends, Albert Chappell, a printer, and Ernest Rudman, a tobacco cutter, who live in the same household at 25 Kensal Road. They are taken to the Worcester Regimental Depot. They are ordered to put on a soldier's uniform.***

Show Ernest Rudman refusing to put on the uniform when it is proffered by the Sergeant.

They are all Court Martialled for failing to obey orders. 3 headed military officer appears. Albert appears before the Court to make his case.

The Western Daily Press 16th November 1916. Bristol Conscientious Objectors, Court Martialled at Worcester. Evidence was given that they were apprehended at Bristol, and that they refused to put on their uniform when ordered to do so. They all pleaded not guilty, and to prove that he was a conscientious objector one of the prisoners said that he was the first man to arrange a meeting at Bristol to protest against the passing of the Military Service Act. They were found guilty.

They are imprisoned for 112 days with hard labour.

Fred Berriman carried to prison and handed to Emma behind the bars.

Trevor brings the prison guard over - he smokes his fag.

Fred Berriman, Chair of the Independent Labour Party in Bristol. He is also serving a 112 days hard labour. In his own account of this time he wrote:

Here one realised that the brutality of the prison system, for we were subjected to bullying and every form of repression, and the slightest offence against prison discipline punished by solitary confinement and three days bread and water. Everything was done in the early period of sentence to break the spirit of the CO's....Personally I had made up my mind to see it through.

Frank Pope is carried over to the prison. The prison guard opens the door and closes it behind Frank. Two shown together walking backwards and forwards in the prison exercise yard.

There was a good proportion of Socialists among the sixty or so 'absolutists' at Dorchester, and we spent the time allotted for exercise each day in talking about our principles and ideals and comparing experiences in different parts of the country.

Fred and Frank shown talking to each other. Guard intervenes and tells them to be silent.

Trevor takes the guard behind the bench and pick up Mabel Tothill. Presented to audience.

Mabel Tothill is the Secretary of the Bristol Joint Advisory Committee for Conscientious Objectors. She campaigns against the imprisonment of CO's, and works to support them and their families. In this role she visits imprisoned men from Bristol.

As Mabel is carried over to the prison and talk to Fred through the bars - the following:

Writing in August 1916. At this present time there are at least a 1000 men in prison, whose only crime is that they have conscientious scruples against militarism. They have been arrested, taken to the Police Courts, sent to barracks, Court Martialled then sent to Military Detention Barrack or Civil Prisons. Many have been punished for continued refusal to obey military orders. Nothing buy a very strong sense of duty could make these men continue to undergo these privations.

Mabel leaves the prison and stand in gateway.

If we are true patriots. If we desire that our country shall be "not fair but the fairest of them all" - we shall stand by those who have surrendered their physical freedom to secure freedom of the soul.

Scene ends

Please hang on and have a seat for a few moments while we pack up. We will then walk a few hundred yards to the end of North Street and turn into Cannon Street.

Walk along North Street turn into Cannon Street - stop outside Furniture Shop

Show photo of cinema

This building was originally Bedminster Town Hall. In 1909 it was converted to a cinema.

1916 Silent film "The Battle of the Somme" is released. It features both staged and actual footage of the battle.

Show photo from the film

The audience read this caption: "British Tommies rescuing a comrade under shell fire. (This man died 30 minutes after reaching the trenches.)"

The London Evening News comments: "It should make an end in the minds of men to the pretensions of pompous princes who ... doom their fellow creatures to suffering and destruction for the gratification of their mad ambitions."

Across the road is George Barker's bike shop at number 12 (where the pub now stands) - we will be hearing more about him later.

Our next stop is just a short distance from here turning right into British Road and right again into Victoria Place.

Turn into British Road and walk up to Victoria Place

Victoria Place - Walter Lewis making speech - Table top puppet

Kit Large table top puppet on cart, police puppets

People Trevor+ 1 to puppeteer the large puppet another puppeteer on Detective Woods, and narrator

Action

Walter Lewis shown making speech

The Western Daily Press 16th July 1918

In the Bristol Police Court yesterday, Walter Henry Chistopher Lewis 34 of 15 Victoria Place, Bedminster was charged with attempting to cause sedition among the civil population by his speeches in the Haymarket.

On Sunday morning July 7th the defendent was speaking in the Haymarket and in the course of his address he made the following sentence:

Look what the Government has done. They have trampled on Ireland, suppressed three hundred million people in India and I am here to speak the truth, although there is somebody here from the building opposite.

Pause to see Detective Woods among the audience - sing police song

I don't care for Lloyd George, Arthur Balfour, or Hughes of Australia. It they who want the war to go on for many years. They are making money out of it.

The defendent who declined to take the oath, he being an agnostic, said he was a member of the No Conscription Fellowship.

A fine of £5 or 25 days' imprisonment was imposed.

Puppet taken off - Scene ends

We will now go back down British Road and cross over Cannon St to East Street.

Walk down British Road, cross Cannon Street, to East St

Stop on the corner of East Street - Clippies Strike in 1918

Show photo of Tram Shed on the end of West Street.

The local Tram Shed is just around the corner. As the war is drawing to a close, there is mood of discontent and a growing number of strikes. Revolution is in the air following events in Russia in 1917.

In August 1918 - Women ticket collectors went on strike supported by all Tram Workers. They were striking for equal pay.

Cross over East Street - outside Bank - Flip Chart Abram Coburg
and then a little further down East St.

East Street - Printers (with view of Robinsons) using letters

Kit: Letters and cart

People: 4 puppeteers and narrator

Action:

Narrators: *Robinson's Paper Bag factory is one of the major employers in Bedminster. They employ many printers. It is a trade that is well represented among the war resisters.*

Puppeteers stand to stage left. In turn they show a letter to the audience and place it on the cart top and move off stage right.

Fred Berriman - Printer

Fred Harper - Litho Printer

Thomas Hutchins - Letter Press Printer

Norman Keddy - Press machinist

Albert Chappell - Printer's Cutter and member of the National Union of Printers and Paper Workers

It is likely they are putting their skills to other uses to aid the cause

We are just going a little further down East Street and turning left into Warden Road.

Walk down East St

Pedestrian area Warden Road - Annie Chappell (mask) network of support

Just down East St from here was the Bedminster Hippodrome a 2,500 seater music hall. Early in the war music halls were used as a recruiting ground but they also had a long tradition of poking fun at establishment figures as we have already heard in some of the songs.

Annie is sitting/standing at cart with pen and "paper" (calico pieces) - reading/writing

Annie, or Nance Chappell is the secretary of Bristol's No-conscription Fellowship. She organises meetings, signs up members, writes to prisoners.

Annie writes, finishes something she's writing, holds it up.

Puppeteer takes bundle of calico and stretches out line of images.

She holds together a wide network of support for those who won't fight.

2nd line unfolded

Annie's husband Bert, and many of their friends, are in jail.

Will Gould, their good friend, writes from prison to his mother:

A visiting order will be sent to you, but you must decide who is to come and peep through the bars at the roaring lion. Most of my male friends are in a similar position to myself. Mrs Chappell, I shall always be glad to see, but I must not make too many demands on her time.

3rd (&4th?) line unfolded

Annie and Bert are members of the Socialist Labour Party, which is working for revolution through labour struggle and the power of unions. They are following events in Russia with excitement.

Lines packed up and Annie rises as text read:

After the war, they will move to Wales, where Annie will be an organiser for the Communist Party. Bert will take up conjuring.

We have a short walk to our final destination

Walk down Warden Road and right onto Dean Lane

Steam Crane on North Street - George Barker (mask) toolbox + boxes

George is seen taking tools from/putting them into his tool box

George Barker - a friend of Walter Told - runs a bike shop on Cannon Street. He has exemption from the military as he runs a much-needed business.

A sergeant calls on George, asking where A two men, conscientious objectors named Platen and Gore, are. He replies that when they are called up they will not be found as they are in a place where the military cannot get them.

A police constable calls about an absentee from the Army. George refuses to say anything, and says the government and the army can go to hell.

George is a member of the Bristol Caving Society, and has recently been putting his caving skills to a new use.

Reveal of chamber with two CO's - leave some time to look at this

Hideaway boxes raised:

George's chamber is one link in an underground network, helping CO's and runaways to stay safe and free, and keep out of the hands of the authorities.

Whiteway box opened. George lifts CO and motions to us to pass him to Whiteway.

Whiteway is an anarchist colony in Gloucestershire. Its members share their property, and work the land to grow their food. George and his wife Minnie will go to live there after the war. So too will Lilian and Tom, the anarchists from London who run Freedom Press. During the war, the colony shelters men on the run.

More small figures passed round to be taken into the other hiding places:

Elizabeth Hutchinson, a Quaker living in Redland, has a house in Winscombe in the Mendip hills, which she uses as a weekend cottage. She lets CO's stay there, and gives them work decorating.

Men on the run camp out together in the wilds - in tents or caves or barns - supporting each other and discussing politics round the camp fire

Some manage to leave the country on ships, escaping to Ireland and the USA, with the help of sailors and union men.

These are just a few of the hidden links of solidarity, connecting those who resisted the war, and refused to fight.

Song: *You who stand for liberty*