

Elizabeth Hutchinson

The report of a court case in the *Western Daily Press* on 2nd December 1916 was headlined 'Redland Lady Summoned: Employing Military Absentees'. Elizabeth Hutchinson of Oakland Road was charged with harbouring absentees from the military at a house she owned in Winscombe. Charles Dowden (who appears in the [group photograph of COs on Dartmoor](#)) and William Elliott were arrested at Winscombe in November 1916.

Both men had applied for exemption from military service as conscientious objectors but were refused. Charles Dowden had been listed as an absentee from the military since August 1916; William Elliott since April. They had managed to avoid arrest until November.

The prosecution case was that the men met Elizabeth Hutchinson, who was a Quaker, at 27 Rosemary Street, the headquarters of the Joint Advisory Committee for Conscientious Objectors. This was described in court as somewhere 'men who take this stand against military service used to meet'.

She accepted that she had known Elliott for nine months and in October had given him 30 shillings to pay their fares to Winscombe. The men had agreed to do some painting for her while they were there. The prosecution claimed that she knew the men were absentees and knew she was acting illegally.

Elizabeth Hutchinson was found guilty on the least serious of three charges and fined 30 shillings. Charles Dowden was court-martialled, sentenced to 112 days hard labour at Wormwood Scrubs. From there he was sent to the Home Office Work Scheme at Dartmoor. William Elliott was also court-martialled served 112 days at Wormwood Scrubs. He refused to take part in the Home Office Work Scheme and served a series of prison sentences with hard labour until he was finally released in April 1919.

See also the pdfs on this website relating to *COs in Prison* and *COs on the Home Office Scheme*.