

Eric Crompton



Eric Crompton was born in 1892. In the years leading up to his conscription in 1916 he lived in the Manchester area where he was involved with socialist groups.

He was sacked from his job as a draughtsman for refusing to volunteer for the army and appeared before a military tribunal in Cheshire in March 1916 asking for absolute (complete) exemption from military service but was refused. He appealed against the decision but was unsuccessful

Eric moved to Bristol, living with his aunt and cousins near Avonmouth, working on a farm. Here he again appeared before a tribunal but was given exemption from combatant service only, meaning he would need to do approved work of national importance. His attempt to appeal against this decision was also unsuccessful. He refused to report to the army and was arrested in October 1916 and handed over to the military. He was held in [Horfield Barracks](#) for several days before being sent with others to the Non-Combatant Corps (NCC) camp near Weymouth. Here he refused to wear military uniform or sign his army papers.

Eric was court-martialled on 6th November 1916 and sentenced to 112 days hard labour in Wormwood Scrubs. Here his case was re-examined and he was offered labour on the Home Office Scheme, which he accepted. He ended up at the Home Office work camp at Dartmoor. He appears in [this group photograph from the Dartmoor Camp](#), along with his cousin Geoffrey Lees. [His autograph](#) is in Gilford Wolland's autograph book.

Eric and his family kept letters & documents from his time as a conscientious objector. They offer important insights into the experiences of conscientious objectors as well as the support they received from their families and other members of the community. Three of them can be seen here - [a letter written when he was moved from Horfield Barracks](#); [a letter written while he was awaiting his court-martial sentence](#); and [a letter written as he was sent to Wormwood Scrubs](#).

Eric was released late in 1918 and after working for a while in Liverpool returned to Bristol. He found it difficult to get regular employment but eventually worked as an insurance agent. He then, like many, suffered periods of unemployment in the 1930s, before working for British Oxygen and Bristol City Council. He was an early member of the Communist Party and remained involved in politics for the rest of his life. He died in 1991 at the age of 98.

The photo above is available [here](#) (by permission of Paul Shotton, Eric's grandson).

See also the pdf on this website relating to *COs on the Home Office Scheme*.