

George Barker

George Barker owned a bicycle repair shop in Cannon Street, Bedminster. His hobby was caving. He was secretary of the Bristol Speleological Research Society. He took part in many of the early explorations of caves in the Mendips. He was also we think an anarchist and opposed the war.

When conscription was introduced, George applied for an exemption from military service on business grounds which was granted. He also put his caving skills to a new use. The Western Daily Press of 3rd March 1917 reported that George was charged with using an 'underground chamber' dug alongside the well in his yard as a hiding place for men evading military service. The chamber was six feet square. It was fitted with electricity and a bell linked to the shop.

George denied the charges but the prosecution suggested he had hidden men here on several occasions. The police had gone to his premises looking for two specific men when they found the chamber.

In court George was described as 'a conscientious objector' and 'a man of violent speech'. He was found guilty, fined £5 and sent to prison for 26 days.

Puppet theatre company Otherstory have been researching and developing George's story and the wider story about Bedminster in WW1, you can [find out more and watch a film about their puppet show](#) and try out their [Bedminster history walks](#).