

Number 76  
February 2018

ISSN 1350-3006

# peace matters

MAGAZINE OF THE PEACE PLEDGE UNION



## **Military training: The vicious reality**

Also in this issue:

Pacifists found Not Guilty after warplane action

MoD challenged over civilian deaths

Women in the army : It's not about equality

# Sign the Peace Pledge and build a culture of nonviolence

**Join online at [www.ppu.org.uk](http://www.ppu.org.uk) or fill  
in the form below.**

I/we would like to sign the peace pledge (see wording oppo-  
site) and join the Peace Pledge Union.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Email address \_\_\_\_\_

*Annual subscription: £21, or £10 if you are on a low income,  
or £28 for two at the same address. Or you can subscribe to  
Peace Matters without joining the PPU for £6.*

Either: I/we enclose a cheque for £\_\_\_\_\_

Or: debit my/our card for £\_\_\_\_\_

Card type \_\_\_\_\_

Card number \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

Expiry date \_\_\_\_\_ Security number \_ \_ \_

To: The Manager: Bank \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Your account number \_\_\_\_\_

Please pay on / /2018 and on the same day each  
MONTH / YEAR (delete as appropriate)

To: Unity Trust Bank, 9 Brindley Place,  
Birmingham B1 2HB

60-83-01 Peace Pledge Union Main Account no 20386940  
the sum of £ \_\_\_\_\_ amount in  
words \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**“War is a crime against  
humanity. I renounce  
war, and am therefore  
determined not to  
support any kind of  
war. I am also  
determined to work for  
the removal of all  
causes of war.”**

ISSN 1350 – 3006

Peace Pledge Union

Peaceworks

1 Peace Passage London N7 0BT

Phone: 020 7424 9444

Email [mail@ppu.org.uk](mailto:mail@ppu.org.uk)

Website: [www.ppu.org.uk](http://www.ppu.org.uk)

*Peace Matters* is published by the Peace  
Pledge Union. Material published in  
*Peace Matters* does not necessarily  
reflect PPU policy.

Editor: Symon Hill, with help from Annie  
Bebington

Typeset and design: PPU

Printing: Lithosphere

The Peace Pledge Union is the oldest  
secular pacifist organisation in Britain.  
Through War Resisters' International it  
links with similar groups around the  
world. It is one of the original sponsors  
of the Campaign Against Arms Trade, a  
member of Liberty and a co-operating  
organisation of Landmine Action.

**For information, visit  
[www.ppu.org.uk](http://www.ppu.org.uk)  
or call 020 7424 9444.**

# Against all armies

*Symon Hill, PPU Co-ordinator*

The new year had barely begun when the UK army found itself derided across the media for a new recruitment campaign.

The campaign features advertisements claiming that recruits receive “emotional support” in the army (pictured). It is the latest in a series of misleading recruitment campaigns, which have become increasingly desperate as the army fails to meet recruitment targets.

The advertisements also promise women, gay people and Muslims that they will be welcome in the army.

They were predictably attacked by the sort of militarist misogynists who are as contemptuous of women and LGBT people as they are of anyone showing emotions (except for their own aggressive emotions, which are presumably OK).

The recruitment campaign was also criticised by peace and human rights campaigners, including the Peace Pledge Union (PPU). We drew attention to several recent pieces of research demonstrating



the real effects of military training on recruits and the lack of mental health support for those affected.

Armed forces brutalise young people so that they will do unspeakable things to other human beings. This is what armies do. This is what armies are.

Following the controversy, the *Times* published a letter from former head of army recruitment, Chris Sexton, who said that advertising campaigns had little effect on recruitment numbers. He added that most people who sign up have thought about the army since they were a much younger age. No wonder the armed forces are keen to get into schools and increase cadet forces.

There can never be an

ethical army that respects people's differences. Militarism subordinates individual needs to the demands of those in charge. Armed forces are rooted in violence and unquestioning obedience.

In this issue of *Peace Matters*, you can read a personal description of the realities of army training by ex-soldier Wayne Sharrocks (pages 8-9). Hilary Cornish discusses responses to the armed forces' attempts to recruit women and portray themselves as champions of equality (pages 10-11).

We also have a range of news on pages 4-7, while art, poetry and book reviews appear on pages 12-15.

## PPU members declared Not Guilty

Two members of the Peace Pledge Union have been declared Not Guilty of criminal damage after a court heard how they were attempting to disarm warplanes bound for Saudi use in Yemen.

Sam Walton and Dan Woodhouse entered the BAE Systems base in Warton, Lancashire in January 2017 to disarm warplanes that were due to be sold to the Saudi government. Although they were stopped just before they reached the planes, they were charged with criminal damage relating to the fences and doors they had broken through to enter the base.

Delivering his verdict at Burnley Magistrates' Court on 26 October, district judge James Clarke said he had heard Sam and Dan's "beliefs regarding the events in Yemen, that they include the death of civilians and the destruction of civilian property, and the basis for their belief that this amounted to war crimes".



Sam and Dan made the case that the law allows the use of reasonable force to prevent crime and protect property.

The judge stressed that he was not ruling on whether Saudi Arabia had committed war crimes in Yemen, but he accepted that the defendants had a reasonable belief that this was the case.

He concluded, "Having considered in full the defence under Section 5 of the Criminal Damage Act 1971, I find the defendants not guilty".

While James Clarke insisted that his judgement does not set a precedent, the ruling came as an embarrassment to BAE Systems, the UK government and Saudi Arabia.

Only the day before, the then "Defence" Secretary Michael Fallon had said that criticism of Saudi Arabia in Britain "is not helpful" as he is trying to secure arms deals with the regime.

Sam and Dan had entered the base 21 years to the day after another group of activists disarmed a warplane bound for Indonesia on the same site. They too were acquitted.

Sam and Dan thanked the many people who supported them during the trial. Thousands of people had sent supportive messages, including people in Yemen.

Dan Woodhouse, a Methodist minister in Leeds, said, "Pacifist activism doesn't take superheroes, just normal people who are willing".

## MoD in denial about war death toll

The UK government is continuing to insist that they are unaware of any civilian casualties arising from their bombing of Iraq and Syria, despite evidence that the death toll rose significantly in 2017.

A report by Action on Armed Violence, published on 8 January, recorded 8,051 verified civilian deaths in Syria in 2017, an increase of 55% on the figure for 2016. This includes people killed by all forces on all sides of the conflict.

Globally, the number of civilians found to have been killed by air-

launched explosives rose by 82% on the previous year, according to the same report.

Action on Armed Violence confined their calculations to deaths that could be individually verified, suggesting it is likely to be a conservative estimate.

Another organisation, Airwars, estimates that US-led air strikes in Syria and Iraq killed between 11,000 and 18,000 civilians in 2017.

Incredibly, a spokesperson for the UK Ministry of "Defence" responded to the report by claiming, "We've not

seen any evidence that we have caused civilian casualties".

It seems that the MoD is continuing to repeat the line they produced last September, when they claimed that the Royal Air Force had killed 3,094 combatants but had "no credible evidence" of civilian casualties.

Clive Lewis MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Drones, said there is "a lack of clarity regarding the legal criteria by which the MoD determines an individual to be an ISIS combatant".

Recent protests in Iran have included calls for the Iranian government to end its participation in the Syrian war, while people in the UK, US and Russia continue to campaign against the involvement of their governments' troops.

"It doesn't matter whether it's Russia or the US-led coalition or ground forces leading the assault, the outcome for civilians under attack is always dire," said Chris Woods, director of Airwars.

### Army abuse trial to begin on 12 February

In what may prove to be a historic case, sixteen army instructors are to be tried over alleged physical and mental abuse of teenage recruits.

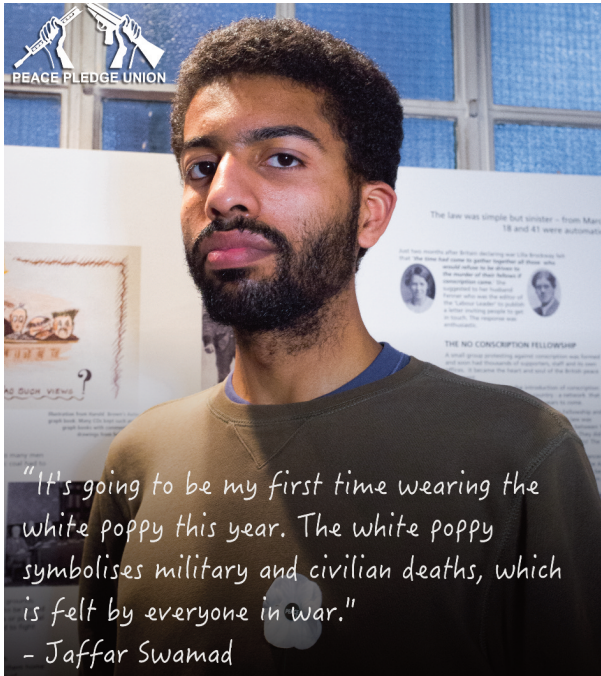
Following a preliminary hearing last year, the sixteen will face a court-martial in Wiltshire, beginning on 12 February.

The instructors are alleged to have punched and spat on recruits, to have held their heads under water and smeared faeces on their faces.

The recruits were all aged 16 or 17 at the time. The UK is the only country in Europe to recruit people as young as 16 into the army.

A number of ex-soldiers have responded to the news by saying that the behaviour described is normal in military training (see pages 10-11 for a personal account).

# White poppies sold at schools, street stalls and a chip shop



As 2017 reached its end, the Peace Pledge Union reported that the number of white poppies distributed was the second highest in any year since white poppies were founded in 1933.

101,000 were sold by the PPU in 2017.

Of course, we don't distribute white poppies for the sake of it, but because of the message behind them.

White poppies, worn every year in the run-up to Remembrance Sunday, represent remembrance for all victims of war, a rejection of militarism and a commitment to peace.

This message was promoted by local groups and individuals selling white poppies in their area, as well as through a range of remembrance events, including the

Alternative Remembrance Sunday Ceremony in London.

Similar events around the UK included Songs for Peace in Bradford and white poppy wreath-layings in towns and cities including Exeter, Glasgow and Derry/Londonderry.

Also in London, Lesbians and Gays Support the Migrants (LGSM), with support from the PPU, laid a wreath to remember refugees who have died fleeing war.

On a more light-hearted note, the Flipping and Frying chip shop in Lincoln offered free white poppies with orders of mushy peas, donating the proceeds to the PPU.

The number of shops selling white poppies increased, while white poppies were also sold by students at universities including Bradford, De Montfort, Dundee, East Anglia, Essex and Swansea/Abertawe.

Around thirty schools ordered the new White Poppies in Schools pack, produced jointly by the PPU and Forces Watch and



piloted this year. Other schools made white poppies available without ordering the whole pack.

The PPU heard from many people wearing white poppies for the first time after being put off by the increasingly nationalistic and pro-military tone in which the Royal British Legion promotes red poppies. The British Legion say that red poppies represent remembrance only for UK and allied armed forces personnel and that they also show "support for the armed forces community". The Legion's website includes a history of recent armed conflicts written from a pro-war perspective.

The highest year for white poppy sales was 2015, when 110,00 white poppies were sold. White poppies were founded by the Women's Co-operative Guild in 1933.

The increase in discussion of white poppies on social media was sadly matched by a rise in online abuse. However, PPU social media sites also received supportive comments and included friendly discussions.

While a number of commentators attacked the White Poppies in Schools project in the media, the coverage triggered enquiries from interested schools and is likely to have increased rather than reduced the number of schools making white poppies available alongside red ones.

Remembrance in 2018 is expected to be particularly significant, as Remembrance Sunday will fall on the 100th anniversary of the end of World War One.



*(left) A PPU online poster promoting white poppies*

*(above) Peace activist Maya Evans and Turkish pacifist Semih Sapmaz wearing white poppies in London*

*(below right) White poppy sellers in Glasgow*



# Military training: removing the aversion to kill

***As the army claims recruits receive “emotional support”, pacifist ex-soldier Wayne Sharrocks responds with a description of the realities of army training.***

On 12 February sixteen former army instructors will face a court-martial over charges of battery, ill-treatment and actual bodily harm to junior soldiers.

We do not know if the particular allegations are true. We do know, however, that military training has been rife with bullying and abuse for generations. Flogging was common until the late 1800s. A junior soldier could legally be bent over a table to be caned until 1956.

These are just the sanctioned abuses. Unofficial punishments are still common in the military. During my time in the army I witnessed and heard of many punishments both official and unofficial. During training my platoon was taught to “look away” while such things were taking place.

Military training is often described as breaking civilians down and building them up with the military’s values and standards. Selfless commitment, integrity, respect for others, loyalty, courage and discipline are in theory the British army’s values and standards. While these all sound good, there

is a much more powerful and life-changing process taking place during the training - or, as I call it, the conditioning.

## **Following orders**

A fundamental element of being a soldier is following orders. The fear of disobeying or questioning orders is instilled in recruits very early. Activities like marching and drill are practised by all professional armies as a way of getting groups to follow orders when told. Any deviation from these orders in the early stages of training is met by a punishment of the whole group. Brutal physical punishments are a regular occurrence.

## **Loyalty to the unit**

During infantry training you have to earn your regimental cap badge. Recruits who believe in this enough will willingly endure physical punishments, mental games and humiliations. Once you have achieved this status you are encouraged to hate other regiments. Anyone that is non infantry gets

*Wayne Sharrocks as a soldier in 2011 (above right) and as a pacifist, protesting outside the DSEI arms fair in London in 2017 (right).*



even less respect and the lowest respect is for civilians: the very people you joined to protect.

### **Removing the aversion to kill**

As an infantry soldier you feel above the rest of the army because you do the fighting and killing. The military uses a sophisticated set of techniques to enable this act. These include increasing the distance of the kill, manipulation of language (e.g calling a person a target), peer pressure, visual stimuli (targets shaped like humans), concentration on smaller tasks (such as marksmanship), competition and dehumanisation, to name a few. All of this is repeated

over and over to hack away the natural aversion to killing. Throughout training you are conditioned to fight on every occasion. This is continually tested both formally and informally. The combined effect of military training contributes to a reordering of the neural networks and pathways. This also affects how you deal with the outside world.



When I joined the army at 17, I assumed that everything was tradition or just the way it had ended up over the years. When I left, I had no desire to go back but I couldn't see a way of living a civilian life. A civilian life was alien to me.

When people think of struggling veterans, it is commonly assumed to be about battle stress or to be injury-related. While they are a contributing or a main factor for some, the one thing all veterans have in common is the conditioning process. It is military training itself which in my opinion is the root of, and blueprint, for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in veterans.

# The army is not feminist

**Hilary Cornish reflects on the army's new recruitment campaign aimed at young women.**

*Hilary Cornish (below), who is a member of PPU Council, wrote a PhD on masculinity and the British armed forces at the University of Edinburgh.*



The UK army has launched a new campaign encouraging young women to join up. Advertisements on social media claim, "We don't see skin colour, gender or religion in the army".

This has less to do with a commitment to equality than with the army's continued failure to meet recruitment targets.

The UK armed forces are around 90% male, but many combat roles have just been opened up to women for the first time.

The BBC drama *Our Girl* tells the story of a young working class woman "finding herself" in the army.

Magazines aimed at young women, including *Marie Claire*, *Now* and *Look*, feature promotions that highlight the social side of military life, focussing on fitness and spending time with animals. The army has now launched its own magazine aimed at women: *The Locker* (pictured right).

As a feminist committed to nonviolence, I'm happy to undermine any kind of military recruitment. But the recruitment of women raises particular dilemmas for me.

**How do we avoid falling into stereotypes of peaceful and gentle women, while arguing that being peaceful and gentle should be celebrated?**

There is a long problem with peace being associated with femininity. Women are derided as silly and weak on the one hand, or as needing violent protection on the other. The abuse the PPU receives on social media demonstrates this as the insults are highly gendered, declaring us weak and effeminate (albeit in unprintable language). We have to avoid arguing that women in particular should be peaceful. Can we shift the emphasis and say we need more peaceful and gentle men?

**How do we acknowledge the capabilities of women - which include violence and destruction?**

As the armed forces portray themselves as supporting gender equality, we can't align ourselves with opponents who argue that women are not capable of violence. Both men and women are capable of horrendous acts. We need to

emphasise the physical and psychological capability of women in non-military fields.

**Can we celebrate and learn from the reality that more women than men choose not to enlist, without implying an inherent peacefulness in women and violence in men?**

Most men, as most women, are not inherently capable of the violent and obedient behaviours that military life implies, which is why long and intensive training is required. Socialising humans into different behaviours has profound

effects on behaviour in later life. If we are serious about building a peaceful society, we can start with emphasising compassion and empathy as serious aspirations for all young people.

**How do we avoid patronising assumptions about female vulnerability whilst critiquing recruitment campaigns?**

For many women the military can be an attractive space to break out of restrictive gender norms or exit controlling family dynamics - though for others it is physically or emotionally damaging,

isolating, misogynistic and abusive. We need to hear both as real experiences. The positive experiences are things we need to emphasise that we want for all women, but not within armed forces and systems that rely on and fuel war. Women must be able to discover and explore these parts of themselves in civilian and constructive environments.

So where does that leave us? We can engage in action that doesn't fall into the above traps: Countering portrayals of "military service" that disassociate it from fighting and war. Highlighting the role of organised violence and the need to be prepared to kill as part of the terms of service. Ensuring that the public is aware of the persistence of sexual harassment and assault, and the poor prosecution and conviction rate of gendered violence in military courts.

These are all approaches that avoid some of the pitfalls, whilst keeping a clear feminist and anti-militarist approach.



## Collateral Damage?

*Linda Murgatroyd, one of the founders of Art the Arms Fair, writes of a new project using art to commemorate victims of war.*

It is 100 years since the end of “the war to end all wars”. About 20 million people died in World War One and an estimated 80 million people have died in wars since then. Over 90% of the victims of recent warfare have been civilians.

The Collateral Damage project aims to raise awareness of these victims, especially those from the last 100 years. We are inviting people to make unique white poppies out of textiles. Each poppy is intended to commemorate a particular victim of war, torture or the arms trade. It could be the victim of a bomb, starvation or disease caused by war; or someone raped, wounded, captured, orphaned or made a refugee; or a soldier traumatised by their experiences. They could be from anywhere in the world.

These poppies



could be knitted, crocheted or sewn. There are patterns online or you could create your own. You could add a stringed tag to say who it is in honour of. The poppies can be worn, with a pin, made into wreaths, or mounted as part of a large installation.

The installation created last year for Art the Arms Fair will form the beginning of a large installation in November, but you may want to make a local one. Perhaps your craft group, school or faith group can get together to make these unique white poppies and take it from there?

*This project is run independently of the Peace Pledge Union, but the PPU is pleased to support it. For more details, inspiration and photos, keep an eye on the PPU website ([ppu.org.uk](http://ppu.org.uk)) or have a look at the project's Facebook page: [facebook.com/whitepoppies2018](https://facebook.com/whitepoppies2018).*

*If you decide to make some poppies or get a group together, please contact Linda and the others via the Facebook page or the PPU, and be sure to send photos.*

## war bonds

bullet-hunched, a rifle hand still gripped,  
grandfather knew, and father with his bootprints  
on the slipped skirts of dunkirk knew,  
while sorrows ease the solitude of sleep  
wages wait, a virus, for the hour  
when captains cue the ragged flags  
and heavens colours lower.

time shreds the banners furled on hearses,  
mothers, always bearers, weigh the lives,  
bonds of war accrue in hidden purses.  
an evil sap survives, forest deep  
where ancient taproots dip,  
and boys and girls come out to play  
shooting from the hip

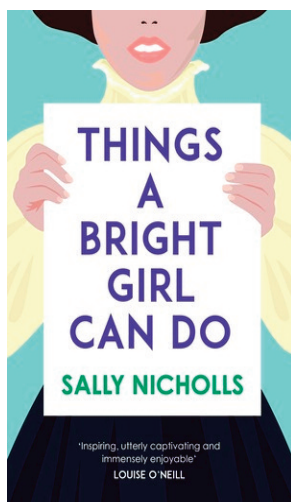
Brent Garner

*Brent Garner is a retired journalist and writer who has had a number of his poems published over the years. He is currently gathering together a selection for publication. He has recently returned to his native Yorkshire Dales after having lived in various parts of the country.*

## Book review: Things a Bright Girl Can Do

**Sian E. Jones reviews**  
***Things a Bright Girl Can***  
***Do by Sally Nicholls (An-***  
***dersen Press, £12.99)***

***Dr Sian E. Jones is a***  
***Chartered Psychologist***  
***and researcher, with an***  
***interest in the develop-***  
***ment of children's re-***  
***sponses to inter-group***  
***prejudice and conflict.***



In 1911, when *301 Things a Bright Girl Can Do* was published, it suggested hockey, maypole dancing and pyrography as suitable pursuits for girls, at a time when young women in polite society were frowned upon for so much as raising their hands above their heads. In this vibrant and gritty historical novel, Nicholls has seamlessly rewritten the realms of possibility for “bright girls”.

Nicholls captures the energy of the suffrage movement in Britain in 1914, through the eyes of three very different protagonists. Seventeen-year-old Evelyn is the wealthiest of the three. Enraged that she is not allowed to go to university, she joins the Suffragettes, in spite of her family and childhood sweetheart. May is a fifteen year-old Quaker, steeped in the cause. Nell lives in poverty in the East End, and longs for better for her family.

From the outbreak of war, through the Battle of the Somme, to the Representation of the People Act, from rallies, arrest, and hunger strike to secret drawing room meetings,

Nicholls breathes a meticulously researched living history into the pages. None of the girls' stories is romanticised, much less sanitised. This is the often grim reality of what it was like to live in a world in political turmoil - and to try to find your place within it.

As Nell and May wrangle with opposing views on the merits of pacifism in a time of war, another battle surfaces: one for female sexuality. Nell has never felt quite right as a girl, and both she and May are lesbians. How will they negotiate - let alone trust to - what was an illicit relationship at the time?

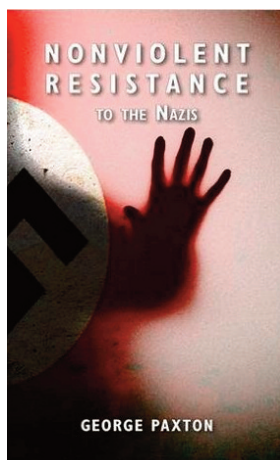
By threading the social-historical context of the Suffrage movement with the turbulence of the Great War, and by rooting her novel deep among the relationships of three very feisty and relatable characters, Nicholls has woven a compassionate, real, and ultimately accessible account of feminism at the time.

I heartily recommend this novel to you, without reservation.

## Book review: Nonviolent Resistance to the Nazis

**Sophie Morrison**  
*reviews Nonviolent Resistance to the Nazis by George Paxton (Youcaxton Publications, £9.99).*

**Sophie Morrison is Development and Operations Manager of the Peace Pledge Union.**



Through a variety of examples from different countries, the first sections of this book show that many people were, at least individually and privately, prepared to do what they felt they could to try to mitigate the horrendous circumstances in Nazi Germany and occupied countries. While these sections of the book might have benefitted from some footnotes, bringing all of the different acts of nonviolent resistance together in this way certainly provides the reader with an impression of the breadth of opposition to the Nazis, and is a great source of information.

Following this overview, more detailed case studies provide for an interesting read – the White Rose Group, who distributed leaflets opposing the Nazi regime, are included, as well as the protests of non-Jewish wives of Jews in Berlin. With the overview and case studies, Paxton is able to helpfully categorise the different types of nonviolent resistance during the period.

The book concludes with a section on 'a Gandhian approach', outlining what Paxton suggests could have happened if a Gandhian form of nonviolent resistance to the Nazis had been taken.

Apart from the useful breakdown of the different stages of the Nazi methods of oppression, I found this section overall to be quite weak as Paxton seems to say what he believes Jews should have done during the Nazi era in order to effect a different outcome. Leaving aside the fact that it's of course much easier to say these things in hindsight, I find it problematic to focus on one persecuted group as the ones responsible for engaging in nonviolent resistance. However, I believe Paxton's preference for public rather than private resistance is an interesting one.

Overall, we can use some of Paxton's helpful examples and analysis to inform how, now and in the future, we can collectively respond to fascism and despotism at its early stages.

## What they said in 2017

**“We have no evidence that RAF strikes have caused civilian casualties.”**

Ministry of “Defence” spokesperson discussing Syria and Iraq.

**“Claims that the UK has no information about civilian casualties frankly stretches credulity to breaking point.”**

Amnesty International’s Kate Allen finds a diplomatic alternative to the word “lie”.

**“It is a great honour to accept the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize .”**

Setsuko Thurlow and Beatrice Fihn, on behalf of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons.

**“The white poppy... is a left-wing political symbol which is designed to indoctrinate people into anti-war theory.”**

Richard Kemp, retired colonel, gets confused about who’s doing the indoctrinating.

**“I don’t let the *Daily Mail* tell me how to run my school.”**

A headteacher, ordering a White Poppies for Schools pack.

**“16-24, primarily C2DE. Mean household income £10K.”**

Leaked army recruitment document makes clear that poorer young people are their targets.

**“There is a real risk that soldiers are now seen as victims, not heroes.”**

Nick Carter, head of the UK army

**“Criticism of Saudi Arabia, in this Parliament, is not helpful.”**

“Defence” Secretary Michael Fallon asks people to stop criticising the Saudi regime so that he can sell them weapons.

**“I find the defendants not guilty.”**

District judge James Clarke acquits PPU members Dan Woodhouse and Sam Walton after they attempted to disarm warplanes bound for Saudi Arabia.

**Keep up to date with the Peace Pledge Union**

**[www.ppu.org.uk](http://www.ppu.org.uk)**

**@PPUtoday**

**020 7424 9444**