



# Journeys in the Spirit

inward outward upward downward

Children's work edition Issue 57 November 2011



## Bertha Bracey – helping children to a safe home

### Getting ready

Some of you may have used *Journeys in the Spirit* children's work edition Issue 28 on Kindertransport. This issue tells the story of one Quaker woman who helped with the Kindertransport. This Friend was my great aunt Bertha Bracey. We will hear what happened to some of those children, 70 years ago. Many people alive today owe their lives to Bertha Bracey.

#### Bertha's story- from Birmingham to Berlin

Like most of our family, Bertha was born in Bournville, Birmingham, into a Quaker family. Bertha's father worked for Cadbury's, the Quaker chocolate making family, but Bertha, who worked hard and did well at school, persuaded her father that she wanted to go to Birmingham University instead. Bertha was born in 1893 and was one of the first in our family to go to university. She became a teacher. It was very unusual for women to become university students in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

At the end of the First World War (1914-18), there were many people in Europe whose homes had been destroyed and whose lives were broken by the war. In 1921 Bertha went to Germany to live with a family in Vienna. She worked at the Quaker Centre helping set up clubs for young people. She then went to Nuremberg to organise a place for families where they could buy food and clothing cheaply. Bertha went back to Berlin to work again with young people. She had a good singing voice and loved to sing German songs with them. By now she could speak German well.

In Germany lots of people had no jobs. People were hungry because food was expensive. Jewish Germans had always worked very hard and ran successful family businesses. Their success made the German Nazi government angry. They wanted to get rid of Jewish Germans who seemed to be living well and were still able to make plenty of money. One night in November 1938 the German police were ordered to go and smash all the windows of the Jewish shops and burn down Jewish factories, shops and synagogues. This was known as "Kristallnacht" because of the all the smashed glass everywhere in Berlin. It must have been terrifying! Jewish parents were desperate. The German police closed Jewish schools and children with a Jewish name or background were banned from going to school. What could the parents do? Many decided it would be safer to leave the country and started packing suitcases. Where should they go to escape the ugly way they were now being treated? This is where we hear about Bertha's efforts to get children away from the dangers, and bring them to safety in Britain.

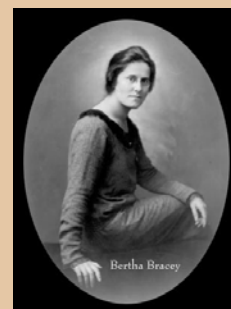
### Gather

Welcome the children into a comfortable space. Have cushions on the floor if you can. When everyone has arrived light a candle. Be still. After a few moments say that today you are going to tell a story about a Quaker called Bertha who helped lots of children who were in danger get away to another country to be safe. Ask the question – 'when do you feel safe?' Listen to and acknowledge any answers that children give.

*Journeys in the Spirit* offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with children and young people.

This children's work edition comes out monthly. It offers resources and ideas to Quakers engaging with 5 – 12 year olds in a Quaker setting.

It provides opportunities for exploring, creating and learning in an atmosphere of worship in partnership on our shared journey in the spirit.



**Bertha Bracey.**  
A bigger picture is on *Additional Resource 57.A*.

## Engage

Here is the outline of a story that you can use to talk about the work of Bertha and other Quakers on the Kindertransport.

A long time ago there was a time when a terrible war was going to happen. It would be called the Second World War. In one of the countries that would be in that war, Germany, bad things were already happening. Lots of children who were Jewish were banned, from going to school. There had been a terrible night when soldiers and police had broken the windows of Jewish shops and synagogues (Jewish Churches) – the ground was covered in glass. It was called 'Kristallnacht' (crystal night) because of the broken glass everywhere. A man called Wilfrid Israel, a businessman in Nuremberg, asked Quakers for help. Six Quakers came to Germany from our country to find out what was happening – Jewish people couldn't go. When they got back home they went to see a very important man in the government (*Samuel Hoare, Home Secretary*). They were doing what we Quakers call, 'speaking truth to power'. They asked him to help bring 10,000 Jewish children to safety in our country. He said yes very fast and it began. One of these Quakers was called Bertha Bracey. She was special. She had already helped lots of children and young people in Germany after the last big war. She was brave, strong and kind. She worked very hard to get Quakers and other people to make room in their homes for the children – all 10,000 of them. They came by train and ship – by themselves, their mums and dads had said goodbye and put them onto the trains. This was called the 'Kindertransport' – the 'children's transport.' On 1<sup>st</sup> December 1938 a train full of children left Berlin. This was the first train of the Kindertransport. The trains continued until 1<sup>st</sup> September 1939, hours before war broke out.

Here is what little boy wrote about being one of these children. His name is **Axel Landmann**. In a way it is also the story of his suitcase.

*"My suitcase was bought in December 1938. It had to be of a small size, and filled to such an extent that a young boy of 9 years could carry it without assistance from adults. It was bought so I could travel by train to Rotterdam with my mother. We would then say goodbye, and I would go overnight on a ship to Harwich in England. All that was in the case was a change of clothing, two school textbooks, my school reports and a little English money."*

Here is another story about a boy called Walter.

### Walter's story:

*"My Kindertransport left from Munich by train. I was 10 years old. My mother obeyed the rule that said parents were not allowed to see off their children at the station. This made me very sad because some parents had disobeyed the law and come to the station to say goodbye to their children. We safely crossed the German border into Holland and were welcomed by some Dutch nuns who brought us some warm milk and white rolls. We then went by ship from the Hook of Holland to Harwich in England. The sea was very rough. I felt very sick. It was my first time on a ship. When we landed we were taken to Dovercourt holiday camp. The weather was bitterly cold and the chalets were not equipped for winter. We had to sleep with all our clothes on, hugging hot water bottles supplied by the people looking after us."*



*Engage is  
continued on  
Page 3*

## References & other information

### From Quaker faith and practice.

**23.26:**

At the centre of Friends' religious experience, is the belief in the fundamental equality of all members of the human race. Our common humanity transcends our differences. Friends have worked individually and corporately to give expression to this belief.....

In 1942 Bertha received the OBE for her work for refugees



This is a sculpture made to honour the work of Bertha. It is in the reception area at Friends House, London. A larger version of this picture is on *Additional Resource 57.C*

The additional resources listed in the text are available at:

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

## References & other resources

Have a look at the Jewish Museum online. On *Additional Resource 57.E* there is a copy of a list, in German, of what a child brought out of Germany with them

<http://www.jewishmuseum.org.uk/>

The additional resources listed in the text are available at:

<http://www.quaker.org.uk/resources-children>

On *Additional Resource 57.B* there are bigger versions of these pictures to show everybody in Children's Meeting. **Picture 1** shows children on a boat coming to England. **Picture 2** shows children arriving at Liverpool Street. **Picture 3** is of a sculpture in Vienna, Austria showing a child waiting to leave. **Picture 4** is of a sculpture in Liverpool Street Station, London and shows children arriving and waiting to be met. After showing the pictures ask some questions like these. How do you think the children feel? How might you feel? Could one of the children could be Axel with his suitcase?

1



2



3



4



## Respond

Have a little bit of wriggle and stretching time. Gather again in a circle round a table, on cushions or on the floor. Place a small empty suitcase in the middle of your group. Also give each person two copies of the suitcase for which there is a template on *Additional Resource 57.D* if possible copy or mount these onto card. Also put out containers of drawing and colouring pencils and felt pens within everybody's reach. Alternatively you could have plain white card, scissors and glue sticks. Say that you are going to talk about getting ready for two very different journeys.

**Journey 1:** Ask the children what they would put into the suitcase if they were going on holiday. What would they need? What would they take to play with? What would they take to eat and drink on their journey? Ask who would be with them? Mum, Dad, brothers, sisters, a friend? Everybody writes or draws what they have thought of taking onto one of the suitcase pictures. Alternatively, everybody could draw, cut out and stick what they would put in their different suitcases onto their pictures. Younger ones may need help

**Journey 2:** Now ask everybody something like, supposing you had to leave your home in an emergency, in a big scary rush, what would you take with you then? What would be most important? Again everybody writes, draws or cuts out and sticks what they would put in their different suitcases onto their suitcase pictures.

When most people have finished drawing and writing invite people to say what they chose to take and why. Ask what it felt like to planning a holiday and what the emergency trip felt like. When you judge that this is complete ask if anybody has any questions about the Kindertransport. Show children the copy of the real list of what a child on the Kindertransport brought out with them – it is on *Additional Resource 57.E*. An online German to English dictionary can be found at [www.ego4u.com/en/dictionary](http://www.ego4u.com/en/dictionary) - just type in the German word, click search and the English word will be there.

If this finishes before the end of your session have out some clay or plasticene and boards. Have some copies of the picture of the Bertha Bracey sculpture, on *Additional Resource 57.C*, for children to look at and then see if they can make something like it or, maybe, another shape that the Kindertransport story makes them think of.

## Reflect

Let's have some quiet worship time...In the quiet, let's think about those boys and girls who had to leave home, with a little suitcase packed for a journey which was **not** a holiday...to travel across the seas to England without their mums and dads...Let's think about their parents who had to be very brave and let their children go unaccompanied on the kindertransport trains and boats to England, to give them a chance to escape and to be safe. Their mums and dad's would hope that the people in a different country would look after their precious children. Let us say thankyou to people like Bertha Bracey and lots of Quaker Meetings who helped the children. Here is a picture of a meeting in Friends House, London. Some of the people were children who came out of Germany and some where the children of people who helped with the Kindertransport.



**Brenda Bailey (right)** at the Kindertransport event in December 2008 in Friends House. Brenda's parents helped with Kindertransport from within Germany.  
*Photo: Karel Choc*  
[maverick\\_97@seznam.cz](mailto:maverick_97@seznam.cz)

## Review

Some of the materials used for this topic may have been quite challenging. When reflecting on how things went with co-volunteers or other Friends, it may be useful to ask:

- What activities did the children really enjoy and engage with?
- What didn't go so well, and how could things be improved for future sessions?
- Were the children able to engage, respond and reflect?
- Did everyone participate?
- What did you learn, and what might you do differently another time?

**This issue was written by Jane Woodford and edited by Chris Nickolay and Howard Nurden. The Topical activity was written by Chris Nickolay.**

The next children's issue of *Journeys in the Spirit* **Issue 58** is about '**Three Quaker scientists**' and will be available on December 1<sup>st</sup>. This is the last in Series 6, '**More Quaker stories**'.

Series 7 will begin in January 2012. The theme is going to be, '**Some Bible stories**'. There will be seven issues. The first, **Issue 59** is an introduction to the theme and will include some history and thoughts and activities about how to talk about and explore these things with children. **Issue 60** is about ways to look at the Creation story.

**Materials available online are:**

Additional Resources Sheets

An easy to use outline for a Children's Meeting session

A simple plan for an all age Meeting for Worship

A topical activity. A story about our fragile earth

There is also a 'How to use *Journeys in the Spirit*' guide; a link to special editions; an archive of previous issues; a discussion forum and a link to the *Journeys in the Spirit* Youth edition.

Go to:

[www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren](http://www.quaker.org.uk/journeyschildren) and choose from the range of links in the sidebar.

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Contact:

Bevelie Shember,  
CYP Staff Team,  
Friends House,  
173 Euston Road,  
London NW1 2BJ

Phone: 020 7663 1013

Email:

[bevelies@quaker.org.uk](mailto:bevelies@quaker.org.uk)

Website:

[www.quaker.org.uk/cyp](http://www.quaker.org.uk/cyp)