

The Museum of... Our pick of the UK's specialist collections

Situated above a former bank in Bradford, the Peace Museum is small, but very active, says *Louise Gray*

Where Bradford city centre, close to the City Hall. The museum is housed on the top floor of a Victorian building that was originally used as a bank.

What It tells the story and history of the peace movement, in the UK and globally, says its manager, Julie Obermeyer.

Opened 1994. The idea for the museum came from one of its trustees who worked at the Give Peace a Chance Trust. The creation of the museum was given further impetus by the first Museums for Peace conference, which was held at the University of Bradford in 1992. For the first few years of its existence, during which it received support from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust, the museum collected, but had no venue.

Collection "We have a collection of about 5,000 items relating to the peace movement in the broadest sense," says Obermeyer. "It includes lots of photographs, textiles, banners and other artefacts." The bulk of the collection comprises graphics – leaflets, texts and sandwich boards used by the Peace Pledge Union in the 1930s – and artworks. There's a growing collection of items donated by Nobel Peace laureates, including Guatemalan laureate Rigoberta Menchú Tum (who gave a woven shirt); and the Iranian human rights activist Shirin Ebadi.

Help at hand There are two full-time members of staff (one development officer and Obermeyer) and a handful of volunteers.

Budget Supported by charitable trusts and individual donations. "We have had a few small grants from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council, but we have to fundraise vigorously," Obermeyer says.

Visits 20,000 in 2008, counting those who saw *A Farewell to Arms?*, the museum's semi-



Give peace a chance: the Bradford Peace Museum boasts a large collection of campaigning material, including badges (above) and posters, such as this 1937 sandwich board from the Peace Pledge Union (below)



permanent exhibition at the Royal Armouries in Leeds, and people who have visited the touring exhibitions. Because its premises have limited access ("There are 60 steps up to us and no lift – it's a problem," concedes Obermeyer), the museum has to get out to other venues.

Highlights "We all really like a 1931 painting, *The Conchie*, by Arthur Gray, who was himself a 'conchie', a conscientious objector during the first world war," Obermeyer says. "It shows a young man being escorted on a train by two soldiers. The painting brings out the reflective side of patriotism; it shows someone who is firm in his conscience, and there is inner peace on that train even as war rages outside it."

Survival tip "Don't be afraid to ask for help," says Obermeyer. "You never know where you'll

get it." A severe computer crash several years ago meant that the museum was in danger of losing its entire database. The expert they contacted has turned into a regular volunteer at the museum.

Sticky moment "I was doing oral histories with some peace campaigners and managed to erase an entire interview," recalls Obermeyer. She confessed her mistake and her interviewee reprised the interview. "I'm so glad I did that," Obermeyer says. "He died recently and had I not owned up, his accounts would have been lost to us."

Current project In addition to revamping its website, the museum has launched a new travelling exhibition, *A Non-Violent Response to Terrorism?* Plans include funding another full-time post and a new venue.

www.peacemuseum.org.uk