

Albert Burrows

“Few public men in Northampton held the welfare of their fellow citizens so close at heart as Albert Burrows,”

By John Buckell

Albert Burrows 1881-1945 was associated with Northampton Labour Party from its inception, and he was a member of the Independent Labour Party (ILP) for many years before that. He occupied several offices in the Labour Party, including Financial Secretary and Chairman.

A Quaker and pacifist, during World War One Albert was given exemption from military service and did alternative service with the YMCA. His nephew George served with the Friends Ambulance Unit. During World War Two, Albert and his brother Harry supported the rights of conscientious objectors. None of these facts was mentioned in Albert's obituary in December 1945, although he surely must have been proud of them.

In 1924 Albert was elected unopposed as Town Councillor for the North Ward, a post he held until his death 21 years later. He served on the Borough Health Committee, and according to the Mercury, brought the town health service to its “present state of high efficiency.” From 1929 he was an Alderman. In 1934 he was made Mayor and his year in office, 1934 to 1935, coincided with the year of Georges V's Silver Jubilee. The Mercury applauded his visits to over 1,000 Jubilee events during that year. However, breaking with tradition, he appointed his friend and fellow Quaker, John Flinton Harris, as Mayor's Chaplain.

Long before becoming Mayor, Albert was active in social work with the Good Templars, the YMCA, the Society of Friends (Quakers) and the Northampton Co-operative Society. He was Chairman of the Board of the Queen's Institute for District Nursing, a Governor of Northampton General Hospital and of the Northampton Town and County Building Society. In 1938 he was appointed as a JP for the county.

In 1926 Albert had been elected to the District Trade Board Committee as a nominee of the Co-operative Union for the Boot Repairing Trade of Great Britain. He sat on both the Midlands and National Co-op Wages Boards. He and his brother Harry ran a shoe repairing and bespoke bootmakers at 98 Earl Street. (Diagonally opposite the Lab).

Albert died on Boxing Day 1945. “Few public men in Northampton held the welfare of their fellow citizens so close at heart as Albert Burrows,” was the Mercury’s epitaph.

Sources: Northampton Mercury, 28th December, 1945, and Friends House Archive of War Service.