



## Louisa Pesel

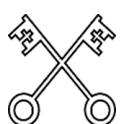
The Khaki Club was a Bradford based organisation for servicemen returning from World War I. It was particularly aimed at those who were injured or suffering from shell shock. Established by women, the Khaki Club had a restaurant, games room and library. It was run mainly by the Bradford Women's Police Patrol, which had been set up to ensure women mill workers could return home safely at night. Women volunteers encouraged recovering servicemen to participate in handicrafts and to learn new skills.

Louisa Pesel was a leading light in the Khaki Club, she believed in using arts and crafts as an aid to rehabilitation. This was the gift she put into action to help wounded ex-servicemen. Born in 1870 and brought up in Bradford, Louisa had an amazing life, travelling widely. She was an embroidery artist, textile historian, teacher and writer. Louisa attended Bradford Girls' Grammar School and studied textile design at the National Art Training School (later, the Royal College of Art) in London, a big step for a woman in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. She later travelled and went to work in Greece, where she lectured and taught; she was promoted to be the director at the Royal Hellenic School.

Louisa returned to Bradford in 1907. She continued to make beautiful embroidered art work, based on her research and experiences when travelling. She exhibited her work at the Victoria and Albert Museum and lectured widely, receiving an award in 1914 from the traditionally all male Worshipful Company of Broderers, a first for a woman!

During World War I, Louisa taught embroidery to Belgian refugees in Bradford and became actively involved with the Bradford Khaki Handicrafts Club, established towards the end of the war to offer occupational therapy to traumatised soldiers. Lady Elizabeth Mary Godwin, who donated one of the Cathedral's Memorial Bells, was also a patron of the Khaki Club and many Bradford women helped with the activities, food and care provided by the 'Club'. The Handicrafts Club was set up with the support of the Abram Peel War Hospital.

Louisa designed activities to help recovering servicemen to learn new crafts and skills; she taught them at the club and helped them to recover from the trauma of the war. One of the things that the servicemen produced was an embroidered altar cloth, now known as the 'Khaki Altar Cloth'. This was eventually donated to the Cathedral and is usually on display in the Chapter House, a lasting testament to the work of Louisa Pesel and to the gift of hope that she gave to soldiers who had experienced an horrific time in World War I.





### Key questions:

- Why was Louisa unusual? What made her different from many women in Victorian/Edwardian Britain?
- What do you think was her most important gift? Why?

### Key activities

- Try some embroidery: design a cross stitch pattern.
- Make sketches of the Khaki Altar Cloth and design your own altar cloth for the Cathedral that tells Louisa's story.
- Blue plaques are often erected in memory of certain people. If one was going to be erected in memory of Louisa, what information would you put on it? You only have 50 words maximum!
- Design a plaque for Louisa - it doesn't have to be blue!
- Watch the **Cathedral Close Up video** about Louisa Pesel and the Khaki Altar Cloth.

