

# The Cadbury daughter who gave away everything

Commerce and welfare can be uneasy bed-fellows. **Chris Upton** finds out about the family member who took her Quaker principles to the extreme

Until recently there was a single prevailing narrative of Cadbury, one to a large extent fostered and polished by the firm itself.

It was the saga of a shop-owning family, from John to George and Richard, of Quaker enterprise and Quaker values, underpinned by a commitment to social reform, charity and self-help. It was capitalism with a friendly face.

However, a couple of recent books, together with the take-over by Kraft, have pulled a few threads out of that tapestry. Commerce and welfare do not always make contented bed-fellows. How well do Quaker ethics survive in the hothouse of multinational money-making?

Deborah Cadbury's perfectly timed 2010 book, *Chocolate Wars*, mapped the trajectory of Cadbury values, as the company mutated from family firm to global brand, via mergers with Fry's, Schweppes and Kraft.

More recently, a Birmingham-based author, Fiona Joseph, has explored how one particular member of the Cadbury clan took Quaker beliefs to their logical conclusion. The title of the book gives more than a hint of the direction of travel. *Beatrice: The Cadbury Heiress Who Gave Away Her Fortune*, 2012, is published by Foxwell Press at £12.99.

You could say that shares are at the heart of both stories. One of the reasons Kraft was able to effect its hostile take-over in 2009 was that shares in Cadbury were no longer in the hands of the Cadbury family.

For all its proud history, like it or not, Cadbury's was no longer a family business.

But even in those earlier days when the Cadburys themselves held all the cards, being part of a share-owning family democracy was not what one family member wanted.

Beatrice Cadbury was the daughter of Richard Cadbury, who, in tandem with his brother George, had laid the foundations for the firm's meteoric rise in the 20th century.

Born at Moseley Hall in 1884, Beatrice was the youngest of four sisters. She was educated at Edgbaston High School, at The Mount (a Quaker school in York), and at Westfield College in London.

But for all her education, Beatrice Cadbury would not be sitting on the company board – running Cadbury was work reserved for the men.

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Nevertheless, as a member of the clan, Beatrice was entitled to preference shares in the company, which came with voting rights. She inherited them at the age of 21.

Beatrice, instead, became involved in Quaker missionary work and, through this, met Kees Boeke, a Dutchman from Alkmaar. They hit it off straight away, married in 1911 and immediately set off to run a missionary school near Beirut.

It was the First World War that turned the young couple's idealism into activism. Forced to return to Birmingham, Kees spoke out against the war and was arrested under the Defence of the Realm Act.

Worse still, imprisonment was followed in 1918 by deportation back to Holland, and Beatrice and their growing family followed soon after. They settled down at Bilthoven, close to Utrecht.

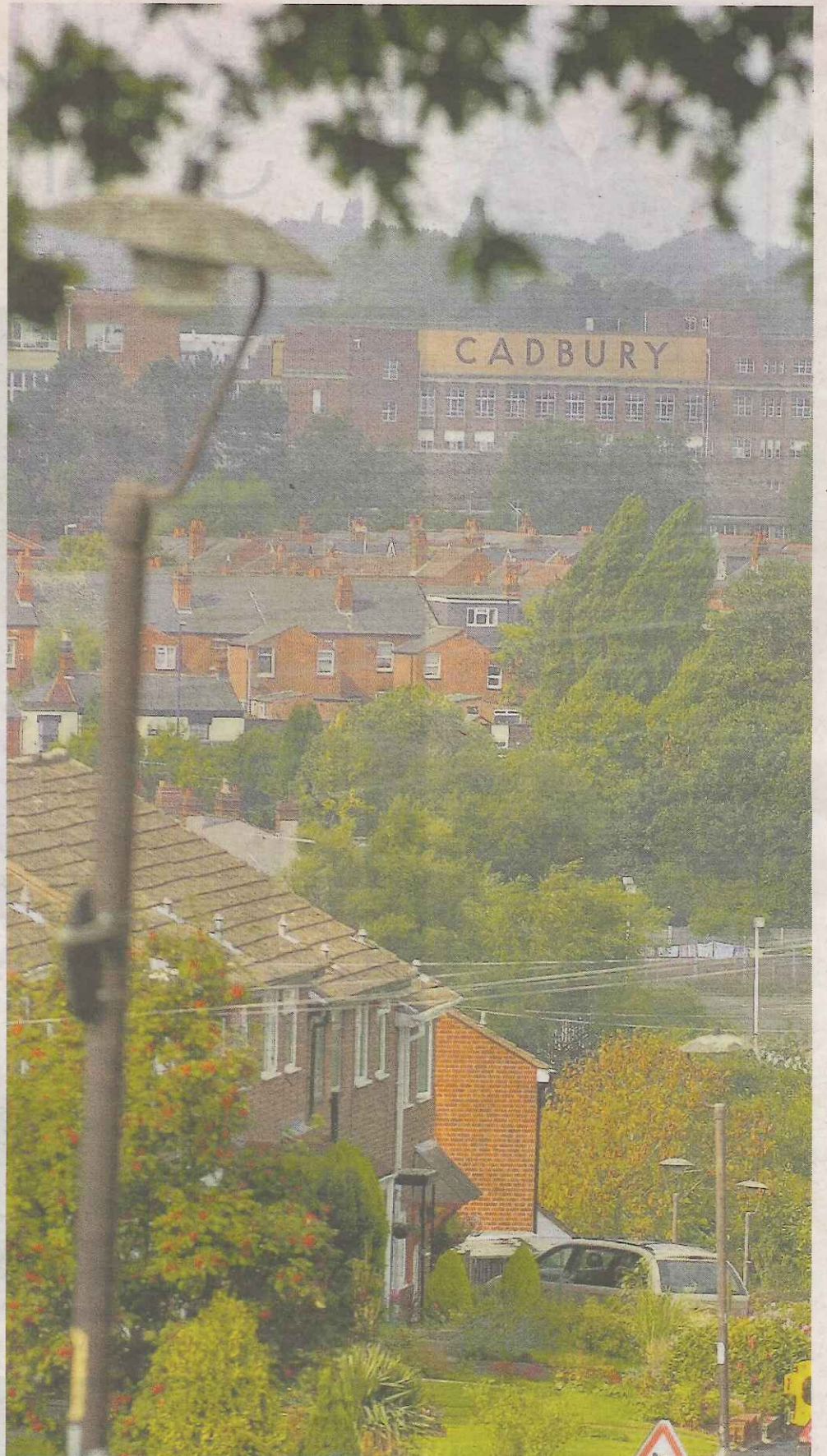
For all Quakers, the First World War presented a huge ideological challenge. How would their commitment to pacifism fare amid the fierce patriotism that the war unleashed?

For the Boekes, the break was total.

Unable to support the war, they felt unable to support the state either. They refused to pay taxes, and embraced a radical kind of Christian socialism. Their house at Bilthoven became the campaign headquarters for a new world order.

But if Beatrice was to embrace communistic principles wholeheartedly, what about all those shares she held in capitalist Cadbury? Could she continue to draw income from a system she rejected?

She could not. In 1921, Beatrice declared her intention to give away her preference shares to the



The Cadbury factory which was founded on Quaker principles.

workers at Bournville. This was more than a slap in the face for a family who had always believed that its company had contributed to the social good. The Bournville works council was concerned, too. By throwing away her shares, was not Beatrice throwing away her children's future as well?

Single-mindedness was a Cadbury inheritance, too. A trust was established – the Boeke Trust – to manage the income from those shares for charitable uses, and Beatrice and Kees were at last free to disengage from society and pursue their humanitarian aims.

Society, however, was less willing to disengage with them. Kees was pursued for tax evasion, while the whole family (there were seven children) slid into poverty, reduced to camping in the woods and foraging for food. Only secret use of Boeke Trust money (made without Beatrice's knowledge) saved them from starvation.

By 1926, it was time to save Beatrice and Kees from themselves. Launching a rescue mission from

Bournville, her brother Barrow Cadbury intervened and found the family a house in Bilthoven. Their clean break with the state was at an end.

However, it was not quite the end for the Boekes' crusading principles.

Kees opened a school, first for their own daughters, but then for the neighbourhood, in which the children determined their own lessons and speed of progress.

The *Workplaats*, as it came to be called, was a radical challenge to traditional schooling, and Kees and Beatrice took its message around the globe. Not quite the new world order they had hoped for, the school was perhaps a light that led towards one.

Kees Boeke died in 1988, and Beatrice 10 years later at the age of 91. She had inherited the Cadbury gift for longevity, too.

Perhaps, with Fiona Joseph's enlightening book, Beatrice too needs to be added to the Cadbury narrative. Cadbury World would be all the richer (in a metaphorical sense, at least) for her inclusion.