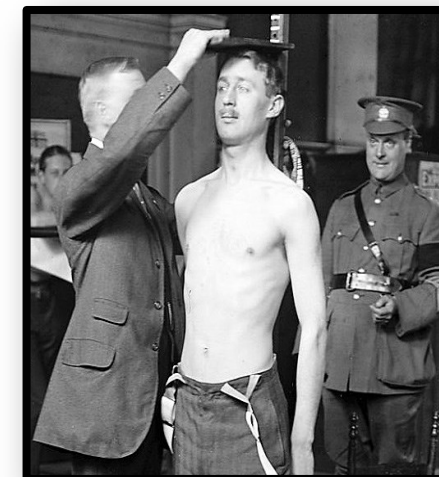




# Leytonstone's call to arms

In the first three months of the war, there were 90,000 British casualties which meant that the bulk of the well trained and experienced 'regular army' troops were lost. The British authorities set about the task of recruitment fully appreciating that the country was in peril and that the war might last for a number of years.



## Government response

A call for 500,000 men (later raised to 3.5 million) brought forward 1,000,000 recruits by January 1915. However 34 % of volunteers were rejected through ill health and others had to be retained to work in vital war industries.

An initiative by Lord Derby in 1915 was designed to persuade men to enlist but it failed and was abandoned in December. The only way to get the numbers of men needed was through conscription.



The Military Service Act became law in March 1916 and conscription began. However men were allowed to appeal to tribunals for exemption. Some medical standards were also relaxed. Nearly 3 million men were conscripted.

## Leytonstone response



Emotive posters such as these, not only prompted Leytonstone men to enlist but also asked their families to be strong and to encourage their loved ones to go.



The Germans were 'helpful' in recruitment because their atrocities in Belgium, the Lusitania sinking, Zeppelin attacks and the shooting of nurse Edith Cavell motivated more men to enlist.

Locally there were recruitment marches and meetings addressed by notable individuals. Inspiring poetry featured in the papers, as did details of past British military victories.

The Express reported that Harold Young (25) who was found guilty of drunkenness, was told by the judge that either he enlisted or he would go to jail.



'Rolls of Honour' were published and featured the names of those who had enlisted and 'pricked the conscience' of those who had not.

Letters from local men serving in France were published. Some encouraged their 'mates' back home to join up. But A.S. Pepper wrote, "Anyone who wants a sobering or refining effect on their lives ought to go through what we have had to go through recently".

Many 'rejected' volunteers joined the Essex Volunteer Regiment and received military training anyway— but in their spare time. By doing so they demonstrated that they were prepared to do their duty if ever called upon.



Volunteer Percy Jay  
Killed May 1915

The appeals tribunals, held at Leyton Town Hall, were busy after conscription began. At one session T. Leader, a munitions worker, had his appeal allowed while J. Milton, a tailor was posted. A boot manufacturer got his three employees exempt but one man's appeal failed even though his two sons were already in the army.