

JOINING UP



The picture above is credited with encouraging millions of men to sign up to fight in the trenches, many never to return. However new research suggests that no such poster was actually produced during the period of the war and that the image was never used for official recruitment purposes. In fact, it only became popular and widely-used after the conflict ended. James Taylor, while researching the history of recruitment posters, claimed the popular understanding of the design and the impact was almost entirely mistaken. "It is believed to have been the most popular design of First World War, and instrumental in recruiting millions of men. But the truth is: that simply wasn't the case. It's an urban myth," he added.



ABOVE—Recruits assembling outside the Station Hotel awaiting to leave Earby from the railway station

Great Britain declared war on Germany on August 4th 1914. It was expected to be a short, sharp war and there was an initial surge of willing volunteers from Earby. Was this patriotism, adventure seeking or perhaps an escape from the routine of the mill?

What ever the reasons Earby men and boys were clamouring to do their bit and the photographs show the recruits having a glorious send off from Earby railway station with the Earby Brass Band playing patriotic tunes. Little did they know:



Crowds assembled on the station platform to see their men folk off to war



Voluntary recruitment was drying up
After the initial surge, the number of volunteers reduced. It was becoming apparent that this was not going to be an easy war. Casualties were mounting and wounded men began returning home.

In spring 1915 enlistments had averaged 100,000 men per month, but this could not be kept up. The upper age limit was raised from 38 to 40 in May 1915, in a new effort to keep the numbers up, but it had become clear that voluntary recruitment was not going to provide the numbers of men required. The government quickly passed the National Registration Act on the 15th July 1915 as a step towards stimulating recruitment and to discover how many men between the ages of 15 and 65 were engaged in each trade. All those in this age range who were not already in the military were obliged to register, giving employment details.

Earby Urban District Council Minute August 1915
National Registration Committee – Persons in list submitted to the clerk be invited to act as enumerators in connection with the National Registration Act 1915.

The Military Service Act introduced conscription and any man between 18 and 40 years old could be called to the forces. Tribunals were set up to adjudicate on appeals against being called up

Earby Urban District Council Minute November 1915
In accordance with Local Government Board's Circular, A J Birley (chairman of the council), William Wilkinson (chairman of the health committee) and local councillor Ben Matthews constitute a committee to act as the local tribunal for the EUDC to decide on all questions referred to them as mentioned in the circular.