

## The Army Structure 1914

Since 1908 the British Army had offered four forms of recruitment, a man could join up as a professional soldier of the regular army or part of the Territorial Force (became territorial army in 1921) a soldier in the Special Reserve or National Reserve.

Conscription, which was compulsory service, didn't come into being until 1916 and was in the form of a short service period of three years or for the duration of the war.

**Regular army**, the recruit had to be taller than 5'3, age between 18 and 38 and physically fit. He could be sent abroad at the age of 19 and serve for 12 years, 7 with the colours and 5 years in reserve and could be called up within the 5 years in time of war.

**Special Reserve** was a part time military service introduced in 1908 as a means of building up a pool of trained reservists in addition to the regular army reserve. Same as above except they enlisted for 6 years, serving 6 months full time training and four weeks training per year for the remainder of their time, by 1914 some 350,000 former soldiers and reservists were trained and ready to be called up.

**Territorial Force** came into existence in April 1908 as a reorganisation of the Militia and other volunteer units that were part time and were formed up of local men who trained at weekends and evenings with summer camp. Rifle practice on Sundays was compulsory by 1913 on the orders of high command, these men were not obliged to serve abroad. That was soon to change, and they found themselves fighting alongside the regulars.

**The National Reserve** was a register maintained by the Territorial Force County Associations.

Registration was voluntary in that you agreed to report for duty when called. In 1913 the strength was 215,000 of all ranks.

As the War dragged on into 1916 the recruitment was far behind the need, Kitchener's New Army of conscripts served for 3 years (short service) or the duration of the war, thus by 1918 the age of the soldier ranged from seventeen up to fifty four. Although it is well known that some as young as fourteen or fifteen ran away to join up in 1914 right through till 1918. Many soldiers who were over their time or had been wounded and could stay at home re-enlisted for active service either in their old unit or another service unit behind the line.

### **Foot note.**

The home front was not very forgiving, many who had been wounded and discharged were met by women in the street and handed a white feather as a sign of cowardness, those on sick leave wore a blue uniform which distinguished them as such, thus avoiding the embarrassment of the white feather.