

Journal #2



Joining Up

Volunteers queue to enlist at a London recruiting station in August 1914. Such was the response to the government's appeal for volunteers that 2 million men joined up within a year and Britain did not have to introduce conscription until January 1916.

A standing army consists of full-time, paid soldiers. What are some of the reasons why a country might want to have a standing army? Would you ever consider a career in the military? Why or why not?

Letter

James Lovegrove explained why he joined the British Army in 1914 at the age of 16.

On my way to work one morning a group of women surrounded me. They started shouting and yelling at me, calling me all sorts of names for not being a soldier! Do you know what they did? They struck a white feather in my coat, meaning I was a coward. Oh, I did feel dreadful, so ashamed.

I went to the recruiting office. The sergeant there couldn't stop laughing at me, saying things like "Looking for your father, sonny?", and "Come back next year when the war's over!" Well, I must have looked so crestfallen that he said "Let's check your measurements again". You see, I was five foot six inches and only about eight and a half stone. This time he made me out to be about six feet tall and twelve stone, at least, that is what he wrote down. All lies of course - but I was in!

1. What is the symbolism of a white feather?
2. How was James Lovegrove treated by the recruiting sergeant?
3. How much had James "grown" between the two measurements?

Vocabulary

Mob: Battalion or other military unit. Short for "mobilized." Being "demobbed" was leaving the military.

Rookie: A recruit or newcomer. From the corruption of *recruit* (and not the bird), although, interestingly, infantry recruits in the modern British army are known as *the crow*.

Sling the bat: To use the vernacular. To speak in slang.

Stone: A part of the Imperial system of weights and measures used in the British Isles, and formerly used in most Commonwealth countries. It is equal to 14 pounds.