

## In recruitment

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One hundred years ago, Britain had a small army and it was losing men fast. Fit, young lads were needed to join up and fight. Footballers, like me, were just what the army wanted.

In Scotland, a politician called Sir George McCrae got the entire Heart of Midlothian first team to enlist and 500 fans followed them.

In London, the War Office realised the powerful weapon they had. Football had a grip on the nation. It was the national sport. Nearly every industrial town up and down Britain had a club. And thousands came to watch them every week. In 1914, the FA CUP final attracted a crowd of 100,000. And not even the outbreak of war could stop the passion for football. Every Saturday there were packed stadiums across the country.

For many people this was a scandal. Young men, perfect for war, were playing or watching a game. Shouldn't they be fighting?

Together with the FA, the War Office came up with the idea of the Footballers Battalion. They would get professional players to sign-up, and offer the fans a chance to fight alongside them. Recruitment posters were designed and plastered around football stadiums: 'The Footballers' battalion wants players, officials and club enthusiasts. Are YOU fit and free?'

The recruitment worked. The captain of Leyton Orient, or Clapton Orient as they were known then, signed. Soon after players from clubs like Arsenal, Brighton and Hove Albion, Cardiff City, Liverpool and Tottenham signed as well.

Throughout the army, thousands of professional footballers volunteered alongside tens of thousands of men from all walks of life. But recruitment was just the start. The battlefields lay in wait.