

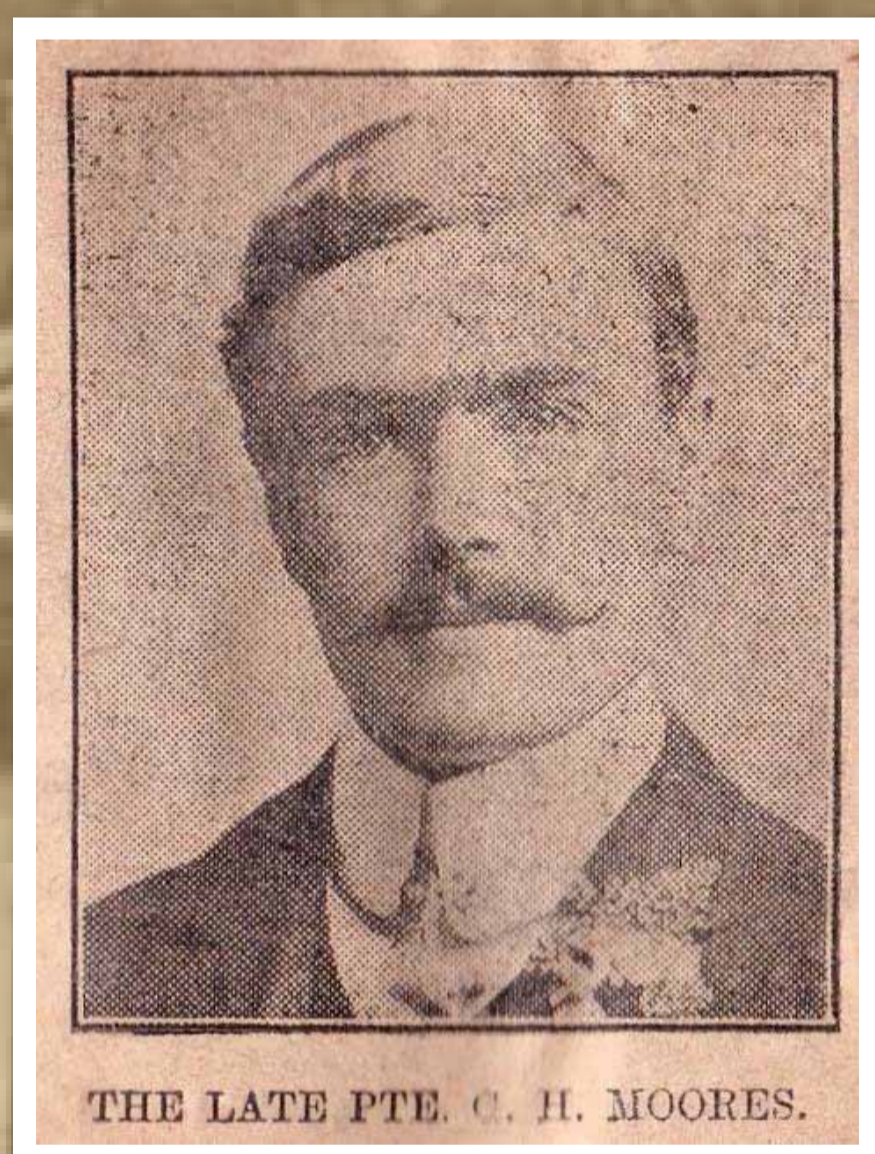
Conscription in Marlow

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Conscription was introduced in 1916 to provide more men for the Army. Men could appeal to a local tribunal against conscription and about 165 did in Marlow, although most were unsuccessful.



Jack Langley, Chairman of the Marlow Appeals Tribunal



George Moores, who lost his appeal in March 1916



A First World War recruitment poster, putting pressure on men to join up

Military Service Act 1916

Although many men volunteered shortly after the War broke out in summer 1914, it soon became apparent that the number was not enough. In 1916, Parliament passed the Military Service Act, introducing conscription to increase the numbers in the Army. Men could appeal against being conscripted and have their cases heard by local tribunals set up across the country.

Marlow Appeals Tribunal

The tribunal in Marlow was made up of local councillors, businessmen and tradesmen. Between March 1916 and November 1918, they heard about 165 different appeals from local men against their conscription.

None of the men appealed because of conscientious objection. In many cases their employers appealed because they were worried about losing skilled men, particularly if many of their employees had already enlisted. Many self-employed men also appealed as it would not be possible for someone else to carry on their trade if they were conscripted. Some men also appealed because of medical reasons or because they had elderly or sick dependents that they had to care for. Most of these appeals were ultimately unsuccessful.

Lenient or severe?

In February 1917, the Marlow Tribunal went on strike for six weeks because the Army had apparently accused it of being too lenient. As far as the Tribunal were concerned, they were doing a difficult job to the best of their abilities and thought they had 'combed out men more drastically than any other Tribunal in the neighbourhood'. Certainly by the end of 1918 there were very few eligible men from Marlow who had not enlisted.

In March 1916, George Moores' employer appeal for him not to be conscripted. Although it was noted that George's brother had been killed earlier that month and another was serving, George's appeal was refused. He was killed serving in France in January 1918.