

# WARFARE AND BRITISH SOCIETY INTERACTIVE

## Raising an Army in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century

### Militia Act

Soldiers were recruited from the local Militia. From 1757, counties were responsible for recruiting men aged between 18 and 45 to serve in the Militia for 5 years. The army was kept small by the government during peacetime. Permission from parliament was needed to recruit men from the Militia.

### Cardwell's Reforms 1870

The Crimean War highlighted several defects and weaknesses in the army's organisation. Some of Cardwell's reforms included the abolition of sale of commissions, the banning of flogging and other measures, such as reducing the length of service, to make recruitment more appealing.

### Press Gangs

In the Recruiting Act 1778, a policy of press gangs was introduced for being drunk and disorderly. To avoid impressment, some recruits incapacitated themselves by cutting off the thumb and forefinger of the right hand. The British government also released criminals and debtors from prison on the condition they joined the army.

### Mercenaries

The Army still struggled to raise the troops required to replace the discharged, wounded, dead and desertion. Between 1803 and 1812, 53,000 men deserted. The British Army used foreign volunteers, such as French Royalists, Germans and Corsicans to supplement its forces. In 1813, one fifth of the army, 52,000 men, were such volunteers.

### TASK

Explain how recruitment in the nineteenth century was similar and different to the seventeenth century.