

Chronicles of Brandon through the Great War.

August 1913 ...

Little did we know we were exactly a year from a most gruesome war, and one that would change our town forever. Sure, we had seen our men go off to war before and, with the knapping of the gunflints, the town had profited from it too, but with this coming war which was already brewing up in Europe there was a payback, and the town paid dearly with the blood of its men. Even now, almost a hundred years later, we still reflect back to that war.

However in August 1913 war was still a year away so let us not get immersed in the doom and gloom just yet. You see at that time Brandon was the centre of our universe and what was happening in Europe had no bearing on us. It was a dry month where barely an inch of rain fell in Brandon, compared to the wash out the previous year when we had eight inches, and this was perfect weather for cricket! Brandon fielded a good team and although results didn't go our way against Feltwell or Thetford, and trust me the Thetford game is one we had best forget about, we did come out on top against Croxton and handed out a thorough thrashing to Euston where school teacher Charles Farrow took eight wickets for fifteen runs.

Another highlight was the erection of a sign post just off the Market Hill, where it meets the London Road and the High Street. It's not such amazing news today I grant you, but back then there were few cars in the town so there was no need for sign posts, anyway local people knew how to get to the next town and back. However these new motorists from further afield came to Brandon and, unfamiliar with the four roads converging on the Market Hill, would invariably take a wrong turn and get lost. The Parish Council had requested a sign months ago and had almost given up hope of it ever arriving, but on Saturday August 2nd it was there, an iron post with iron direction 'fingers', right by Woodrow's ironmongers, or rather Ladbrokes betting shop as it is today.

It wasn't all good news. 58 year old Oswald Carter had always had an eye for machines, being a blacksmith and then latterly an engineer. Well he took some friends in his motor boat along the river to Lakenheath, and upon setting back to Brandon he turned the engine over and caught his clothes in its propeller shaft. Poor Oswald's leg was dragged into the engine which tore at the tore flesh from his calf. His friends did well to stem the flow of blood, and returned him back to Brandon where he was cared for by Dr Trotter. It was just one of those things, an accident, and Oswald was a lucky man. He survived.

- *Darren Norton*