

February 1914 ...

Colonel Edward Phillippe Mackenzie got his name not just from his Scottish ancestors but also from the fact he was born in France. Born into a privileged life, he quickly rose through the ranks of the military, ultimately leaving the Army with the rank of Colonel and still young enough to take up a new career in law. He became a magistrate before his 30th birthday and also spent a year as the High Sherriff of Suffolk in 1882. So what has all this got to do with Brandon?

Well, the Colonel has overseen the provision of education in Brandon for four decades and his defining moment came in 1912 when he proudly laid a large plaque into the wall of the new Infants School building and was presented with an inscribed silver trowel for doing so. Home for the Colonel is Downham Hall, in Santon Downham, which he shares with his wife, and they employ many staff, including a butler, footman, lady's maid, kitchen maid, cook, housemaid, gamekeeper and coachmen.

The Colonel is also Brandon's leading magistrate and can recall a time before the town had its own court and it was a long horse ride to neighbouring Mildenhall to hear cases, and on one occasion he did not get home to eat gone 9.30pm. Now, in 1914 he is getting on and aged 72 he's been absent from a significant number of the court sessions through ill health, only recently his doctor advised him not to climb stairs, but he still has plenty to offer the town.

Today the Colonel is back to his best and is in court tackling the persistent nuisance of Robert Cole. You see Cole is well known to Brandon and his downfall is alcohol. His latest episode saw him standing in Lode Street shouting "profane and indecent language" at people. The Colonel has had enough and threatens him with fourteen days prison, but I doubt that will have much effect and I expect Cole to keep appearing in court for many years to come. Conversely the Colonel tells us he has also been the victim of crime this month and accuses Victor Kent-Woolsey of stealing a couple of hens off his land.

The Colonel also sits on a meeting in the Paget Hall to discuss the licences of the town's alehouses. Apparently not one single person was arrested for drunkenness in the town last year even though there is one alcohol licence for every 127 residents! The magistrates discuss closing down the Three Horse Shoes in Lode Street because the pub is not viable and apparently the pub is only 102 paces from the Eagle Inn, 157 from the Half Moon and 159 from the Five Bells, and they are all more profitable and within staggering distance. The landlord is happy to retire and so it will close in the summer.