

June 1914 ...

It was a pleasant Sunday afternoon on the 14th June when a huge church parade marched through the town from the High Street and on to St Peter's Church. Led by the military band of the 4th Battalion, Norfolk Regiment, it consisted of over a hundred and fifty people representing local groups such as the Territorial Army, Brandon Fire Brigade, Boy Scouts and local Red Cross nurses. Afterwards the army major who oversaw the parade suggested to the nurses, using a rather ominous tone, that they should continue practicing hard because if war broke out then they would be called upon to save soldiers' lives. Some of the local lads serving as Territorials are off to military camp next month and they thought a war might be fun!

The commanding officer of the military band that led the parade had given his permission for them to play a concert on the Market Hill afterwards. So we hurriedly printed off posters to advertise it and word even got out to people outside the town and there was a huge crowd waiting in anticipation that evening. However the performance was somewhat marred by the local Rector putting a stop to it because he said it interfered with the town's church services in the evening. People were not happy.

The following week it was the 3rd anniversary of the King's Coronation and the school children assembled on the Market Hill to celebrate. In front of a large gathering of local residents and dignitaries, a couple of lads hoisted the Union Jack on the school's flagpole. The Headmaster and his wife led the children into singing loads of patriotic songs, "What can I do for England?" and "Hail, Hail, King George", were just some of the catchiest ones. Then came a rousing rendition of the National Anthem. Fred Gentle stood up and told the children to always remember what they had just been singing about and to forget the talk of England not being as great as it once was. "England had once been great and she would be so again if the rising generation would but do their duty!" he told them. He got three cheers for that!

Talking of children, some people reckon their crops have been damaged by children who are not from this town. Well it now transpires that some charitable souls from the cities are sending children to the Rectory for a break. Well, no one appears to have let the authorities know and people are now concerned that these children might be spreading sickness. The Rector, who is not in people's good books after the Market Hill saga, has tried to reassure everyone. He reckons the children would have been screened by a nurse before they left the city but should anyone think they have caught something from the children then he would like to know. I'm not sure that has reassured anyone!

Before I put my pen away for this month, there is just one more thing to mention before I finish. The local newspapers are making a fuss about an Austrian royal couple who have been assassinated in Bosnia.