

April 1915

They say you don't know what you have until it is gone. Well, in the Welsh Fusiliers, who were billeted with us for five months, we knew we had something very special. On the evening of Sunday 18th April, they repaid our hospitality by treating us to a rousing demonstration of their singing in St Peter's church. They did not disappoint. We have had many different regiments stay in the town since war was declared. They come and go without much fuss. The Welsh Fusiliers were different. When word got out that they were going to depart from the town's railway station at 8.30pm one night, the platform was heaving with well-wishers and the town gave them a proper send off.

I am sure you will see the irony in this next story. When war was declared, a young lad from Brandon, named Edgar Randall, volunteered with his mates to go off and fight. His mother, who lives on London Road, was beside herself. You see her husband died about three years ago and all three of her sons are off fighting. Her nerves had got the better of her and so she went off to stay with her married daughter in London, in hope of getting some respite. Trouble is, while they were at a cinema in the city a Zeppelin bomb struck the building and the poor woman's nerves were shot to bits. She returned home a proper wreck! It seems young Edgar received a few days leave from his unit, who were training at Aldershot, and returned home to care for his mother. When he did not report back to his unit they communicated to Brandon's police and asked them to make enquiries. The police, led by Inspector Mobbs, visited the lad's mother and found Edgar. Edgar, to his credit, freely admitted he had overstayed his leave. However the police had no option but to escort him to the police cells and await the arrival of the Military Police. Edgar's departure from the town was poles apart from that of the Welsh Fusiliers.

Over in France our lads have not been receiving the best hospitality. I will leave you with a couple of letters from a Brandon lad named Whitta ...

"We are having one of the worst battles of the war now. The other night our men blew up a hill and drove out the Germans, but we lost a lot of men, hundreds, and the battle is still raging. The worst of all was our sand bags got shelled down, and two of us got blown yards twice, but never got hurt, only the wind knocked out of us. Two nights after that they shelled the same place again and killed the young fellow by the side of me. The shell hit him and he died in a minute and I had to bury him. He was only seventeen. He put up with something, as he was going sick the same night. He had great sores on his shoulders, and half an hour after he said he was going sick he got killed."

"We have not had our boots off for twenty days. We have been up the firing line all the time and do not know when we are going to get relieved. We look like being up here some time yet, as they cannot get the reserves up on account of the fierce battle raging. The fellows say the name for it ... 'Hell upon Earth'."