

## April 1917 ...

After the declaration of war Brandon bolstered its police force with additional Special Constables. It was felt more decent folk were needed to maintain law and order should the Germans ever invade. There was no invasion. A few months ago Inspector Frederick Mobbs, head of Brandon's police, oversaw the swearing-in of more specials after anxious residents reported sightings of Zeppelins flying over the town. One of those new specials was Alfred Challis.

It is 8pm Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> April, and Alfred, in his home on Rookery Row, Town Street is drawn to a commotion outside. He notices Rose Wilson striding across the street with purpose, behind her a gaggle of children follow, so he decides to see what happens next. Rose is heading toward the home of Elizabeth Baker, which will only mean trouble. Most of Town Street know Mrs Baker and do their best to avoid her, for she possesses one of the foulest mouths in Town Street. Mrs Baker, aware that Rose is coming to confront her, launches a pre-emptive barrage of profanity her way. Rose is in no mood to be intimidated and responds in kind, leaving Alfred shocked at what he hears. His shock is a stark contrast to the beaming faces of the children who are relishing every second! Alfred's obligation as a special constable is to act as peacemaker and restore order, which he does eventually after twenty minutes, although poor Alfred is still not really sure why it all started. To make matters worse he knows it will be just a matter of time before someone else kicks off. Alfred believes the people in Town Street are more agitated nowadays. Perhaps the threat is less from the Germans and instead people need protecting from themselves?

A couple of weeks later, Inspector Mobbs, accompanied by Constable Burgess, is on duty on the corner of London Road and Town Street. It is 7am and the pair, hidden from view and dressed in plain clothes, are observing the Plough Inn after a tip-off that the pub is serving drinks outside of its licensed hours. Twenty minutes later the pair witness two lads from Town Street walk toward the rear of the pub. Another man follows them in after another ten minutes, then a fourth at 8am. The policemen wait a few minutes in case anyone else shows up, then they make their way to the rear of the pub to investigate. The back door is not locked so Mobbs carefully opens it, revealing Edward Lingwood stood in the kitchen facing him. At a table sits the pub landlord, Alfred Rolph, with Batley Thompson, the latter has a pint of beer in front of him. Mobbs peers behind the door and sees a rather sheepish Herbert Docking, also with a beer. Mobbs enquires where the fourth man has gone, to which Rolph says he had already left. Mobbs questions what is happening and Rolph replies, "*I drew them a pint of beer each, but I have taken no money.*" What Rolph is saying is true, however it transpires the men have used vegetables as payment instead. Thompson has paid with potatoes and Docking brought greens and beans. Sensing the game is up, one of the men tells Mobbs, "*I suppose we might as well drink the remainder of this beer as I expect we shall have to pay for it!*" His assessment of the situation is spot on. Mobbs issues them, and the landlord, with a court summons.