

## August 1916...

Reports of gunshots on the Bury Road, near May Day Farm, reached Inspector Frederick Mobbs moments ago. Now, almost on the scene, he wonders if poachers are to blame. Mind you local men are quite savvy and use the quieter trapping methods, so he convinces himself it cannot be poachers. He spots a motorcycle and sidecar parked up on the side of the road. A man sat on the motorcycle is now at the sharp end of Mobbs' questions. The motorcyclist says he is Victor Armitage and works at an army canteen in Elveden, but has no identification to prove this. Mobbs notices a double barrel shotgun resting in the sidecar, so he attentively peers in looking for any dead animals. There are none. Was Armitage trying to bag some meat for the army canteen? Armitage denies this, stating he is no poacher and only wanted to fire off a couple of cartridges from his new gun. He assures Mobbs he hit nothing, then goes on to confess he does not even own a gun licence. Mobbs has heard enough, he cannot have people going around firing off guns, so he serves the man a summons to appear in Brandon's police court.

Back at the police station Fred Mutum is complaining that someone attacked his horse. This case has been rumbling on for weeks now and Mutum's livelihood depends upon his horse carting stuff around town. He reckons he went to harness the animal for its next job, collecting mail from the railway station, when he noticed a cut to its throat. A veterinary surgeon was immediately contacted and a report filed with the police. That was weeks ago and since then rumour has it that the animal merely caught itself on barbed wire. Mutum wonders if Mobbs, acting on this rumour, has given up looking for the culprit. He declares there is no barbed wire anywhere on his land and after searching his meadow he found no blood, but there was blood in the manger. Surely this proves the animal was attacked while it was locked up? Mobbs does his best to placate the man, but Mutum demands action.

Once again Mobbs faces a trip up the Bury Road to Elveden. It appears one of the soldiers at the army camp, a gunner of the machine-gun corps, has been charged with stealing £85 from a Leicester council. Mobbs' mission is to arrest the accused and detain him until police from Leicester Constabulary arrive and take responsibility of their man. Had the soldier stole from the army then it would have been dealt by the Military Police, but with this being a civilian matter Mobbs will get involved. He is not one who delegates responsibilities easily.

It is plain to see that Inspector Mobbs is a busy man, as are his constables, especially with the comings and goings of soldiers stationed nearby. It may get even busier for him soon. The West Suffolk County Council are meeting to discuss making cuts to the number of police in Brandon. Why? Well so many men are being killed in the war that the policemen are seen as ideal replacements - young, healthy and disciplined. Mobbs has two allies in Colonel Hamilton and Colonel Spragge, who argue Brandon's case at the council meeting. Their arguments hold sway and the council vote to maintain the current level of policing ... for now.