

## December 1917...

From his fur factory on George Street, Albert William Rought-Rought can see his home. Home is Heath House, just off the Bury Road, which he shares with his wife, Mary, and three sons, Basil, Rodney and Desmond, although it is a wonder he sees his family at all due to his commitments. Beyond being one of Brandon's biggest employers, he is a councillor at both parish and district levels, and was recently made a Suffolk magistrate. For the past three years he has also been Commandant to Brandon's Volunteer Training Corps, overseeing the actions of the local militia who might need to defend the town in the event of an invasion. Perhaps his most critical role is sitting on the 'Tribunal' to hear men argue against their conscription, where his decisions may ultimately lead to men dying in the war. In fact, there is barely an asset of Brandon life that he is not involved with. In peacetime he represented Brandon at cricket.

Now, in the lead up to Christmas, Albert has added another vital string to his bow. As chairman of Brandon's food committee, he can impose maximum prices on certain foods sold in the town. For example, shops and farms cannot charge more than 2s 5d for a pound of butter, and even then anyone wanting to sell it must apply to the Post Office in the High Street for a certificate. This legislation is necessary to stop the black-market selling of food at prices beyond the reach of most residents. The committee has also imposed a 3d limit on a pint of milk, on the proviso people collect it from the dairy, otherwise dairies can charge up to 5½d per pint if people want it delivered to their homes. Despite these well-meaning measures to protect residents, some businesses are not happy. There are rumblings that one dairy will no longer provide milk to Brandon. Butchers have raised a petition against the 2d maximum for a pound of meat, arguing they are being forced to pay more at market for cattle, especially in the lead up to Christmas, thus they cannot afford such impositions. The food committee have some sympathy for these businesses but upper most in their thoughts is the protection of residents. Therefore, the committee have purchased four tons of potatoes for use in bread making, hoping it will allay residents' concerns of a bread shortage. They are also reminding people of the 15<sup>th</sup> December deadline for sorting out ration cards with local grocers because next month see the start of sugar rationing. The outlook is grim, and this fourth wartime Christmas is set to be the most austere yet. There are serious doubts we could last another.