

February 1915

With the war not going well in Europe, thoughts naturally turn to protecting our town, especially following the Zeppelin attacks in other parts of East Anglia. A meeting has been called in order to get local men to join a group called the Volunteer Training Corps (V.T.C.). Tonight the Paget Hall is filled to the rafters and on the stage is Sir John Aird. He is chairing the meeting and this is his first official appearance in the town since he took up residence at the Brandon Park Estate. Flanking him are representatives from Brandon's council, the church and the military. A hush descends upon the meeting and we are ready to start. First off we stand to give a rousing rendition of the national anthem...

First up to speak is an officer from the Norfolk Regiment. He outlines the role of the V.T.C. If a man is too old, or too young, or not fit enough to enlist for the war, or perhaps he has vital employment, then he should serve at home with the V.T.C. The officer suggests Brandon's group could be responsible for defending the railway from German spies. The authorities cannot at present offer weapons or uniforms so the V.T.C. will have to get their own, but the captain reckons this will not be a problem for Brandon. He suggests spies usually carry a revolver and thus would be no match against the shotgun our farmers carry on their land! Most importantly though, the men would learn army drills and by doing so they would be contributing to the "common cause". After all, one day they may be called upon to fight the enemy. The audience respond to this with loud applause.

Next up is Sir Henry Bunbury who lightens the mood by suggesting that a few of the audience would benefit from the exercise of doing regular drills. Then his speech takes a sterner tone when he reinforces the fact that it is our patriotic duty to defend this nation and thus free the more able-bodied men to go overseas to fight. Just like a preacher on the pulpit, he lets us know that men who have not enlisted into the army would be shamed into doing so, "The sight of the old men in uniform would put the fear of God into the hearts of the younger men". "HEAR, HEAR" the audience roar out in agreement, while vigorously applauding the man.

More men stand to speak, all enforcing our duty to join the V.T.C, and each receives loud applause. There is a call for men to put pen to paper and sign up for Brandon's V.T.C. Thirty-three men do so. Sir John Aird concludes the meeting by thanking us for answering the "bugle call". He claims it has been a great honour to see our response, and suggests that Brandon's V.T.C. will be something the town will be proud of.

There is one last act before we go home. Everyone, without exception, is inspired to give a most rousing rendition of the National Anthem. It was almost as though we wanted the enemy to hear our fortitude and it leaves no doubt that the meeting has whipped up a fighting spirit. However, the V.T.C. are not the only ones engaged in defending Brandon ...