

January 1916

Happy New Year. The sound of “Auld Lang Syne” had barely dispersed before Brandon said “goodbye” to two notable constants. The first was the announcement from the Post Office that they were cutting the number of postal deliveries in the town. By the end of the month Brandon will lose its evening delivery of mail, leaving us with only the early morning and mid-day deliveries. The other departure was the passing of ninety-six year old James Kent, who lived on the London Road and was rumoured to be one of East Anglia’s oldest people. Born in 1821, he outlived five monarchs and two wives, and his excellent health saw him continue working until just a few years ago. During his lifetime James saw many changes in Brandon, some of which certainly caught us out on more than one occasion. This month a couple of children going about their play, as children had done for hundreds of years previous, suffered the consequence of change in Brandon ...

It is true to say that since the start of war Brandon has witnessed an increase in traffic, but I am not talking of the commonly used carts and cycles. There are noticeably more motorised vehicles travelling on Brandon’s roads, roads built with the foot or hoof in mind and, along with the ancient bridge, they are showing the strain. The bridge has since been patched up and the council are under pressure to do likewise with the roads. Although our wealthier residents own a motorised vehicle, the increase has more to do with military traffic and other visitors passing through the town.

When Harold Clarke set off from his Ixworth home on Monday 17th January, he had no idea that his vehicle’s mudguard would impact upon young Ernest Hunt’s head. Hunt, aged seven, was wholly unaware of Clarke’s vehicle as he ran onto Bury Road, near Heath House. Clarke was mortified, even though eyewitnesses declared he was not to blame. He drove the boy, and the boy’s father, to Dr Trotter, but the doctor could do nothing other than send the boy home and hope the boy’s condition improved. Ernest Hunt has always been a delicate child, so people are naturally concerned for him now he is too unwell to leave his bed.

Perhaps that incident should have raised awareness of the dangers of motorised traffic? Alas it was not so and there was another accident, eight days later, on the 25th, when six year old William Baker, was hit by a motor vehicle driven by Harry Adcock, from East Harling. A soldier saw the accident and once again verified that the driver was not to blame. In fact, by all accounts, Adcock was driving quite slowly as he approached children at play on the Market Hill. Young Baker was heading to school after lunchtime when the impact occurred outside the Five Bells public house. Once again the instrument of the accident was employed to ferry the victim to see Dr Trotter. This time the doctor stitched up a nasty wound to the back of the child’s head. Then Adcock drove Baker to Town Street and reunited the boy with his family.

We are never sure if change is for better or not, but some suggest we would do well to adapt our ways if we can. That is if you want to be more like James Kent and less like Ernest Hunt or William Baker.