

## July 1917...

There was some sympathy felt for the soldier taken into custody by Constable Burgess earlier this month. When questioned, the soldier could offer no explanation as to why he was in Brandon and not off training with his unit. Labelled a 'deserter', he sat in a police cell until the military police arrived to take him away. There were of course a few in Brandon who pointed to Lieutenant Guy Wood, whose father lives in Grafton House, as a shining example of a good soldier. You see Guy has just been awarded the Military Cross for gallantry, despite being seriously wounded in battle. However many have become weary of this war. Gone are the days when residents waved off troops from the railway station, instead, after three years, the enthusiasm for sending more lads off to war is gone.

Robert Tuck was one of the first to go to France on account of him being a Volunteer when war was declared. He has since seen retreat in Loos, spent months of hell at the Somme and recently saw action near Arras, in France. His wife Annie, of George Street, has just received a letter from him saying he has been wounded, but that he will be fine. She suspects he is playing down the extent of his wounds because an army chaplain also wrote to her, giving a more dire account of Robert's health. There are fears that he may lose the use of an arm and his days in the army are most definitely over now. Another man seriously wounded in the fighting is Willie Woodrow. It was no enemy bullet that done for him, but instead red-hot shrapnel blasting through his right hand when the trench mortar he was operating blew up. He too is destined to return home a damaged man.

Back in April, the British Army began an offensive just east of Monchy-le-Preux, near Arras in France. Spearheading that offensive were the men of the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, Essex Regiment, with an objective to capture high ground held by the Germans, which they did quickly. Then, as the Essex consolidated their gains, the Germans counter-attacked with some of their finest Bavarian troops. It did not end well for the Essex and hundreds failed to return back to their lines. Some were formally identified as being killed, but most were simply listed as "missing", as is the procedure until a soldier's fate is confirmed. Brandon has a few men serving in the Essex Regiment and two of those were listed as missing.