

March 1915

The town has been gripped by the Zeppelin attacks on the region and they seem to be the centre of all conversation and subsequent gossip. Almost everyone claims to have heard them at night, flying over Brandon, and despite the many false alarms there is still a need to take precautions. No lights will be allowed to shine from our homes during the hours of darkness and more Special Constables have been sworn in to assist with keeping law and order. The hooter in Messrs G Wood's timber yard normally tells the men when it is time to start or finish work, but from today it will also alert the town to the approaching enemy. Should that happen, the hooter will sound loudly for ten minutes and be the signal for us all to return to our homes to await further instruction.

It is not only the Zeppelins that presently concern us. There is the fearful exposure to disease. Our concern was highlighted when Mr and Mrs Gathercole, from Town Street, were hauled before the Magistrates for failing to notify the authorities of their daughter's illness. It seems young Mary was suffering from Scarlet Fever, and the proper procedure would have been for her parents to quarantine her and let the council know. The trouble was Mrs Gathercole took the child into town with her when she visited the shops. The child could well have infected other children or even the soldiers billeted in the town. Some have suggested the parents are unpatriotic because a sick soldier cannot train or fight!

I previously mentioned Brandon's Volunteer Training Corps. Well they are going from strength to strength, not least because of all the posters around town urging men to join. About seventy men attended the latest drill. For those interested, Dr Trotter has the paperwork and meetings are at the Drill Hall on Monday and Wednesday evenings. One of their roles is to look out for enemy spies and talking of which, a Brandon lad in France has seen a couple captured. Norman Gore, whose parents live in Mile End, reckons he saw two men dressed in British army uniforms but the men could not speak English properly. They were condemned as spies when found to be wearing German uniforms under their British ones, and their fate was concluded by a firing squad!

Mrs Linge, of George Street, had been frantic with worry about her husband John, who was reported to be a captive of the Germans. None of the authorities could confirm his welfare and eventually the American Ambassador stepped in and contacted the Germans on her behalf. This week she finally received a postcard from John. Coincidentally, Ambrose Field, another P.O.W., also wrote home to his mother, who lives in Bury Road, this week. It seems both men are being treated well by their captors. Sadly Mrs Field also received tragic news of another son and it appears that a German sniper's bullet was her Alfred's undoing. Another Brandon man was lost to the war this month. Arthur Haydon, was well-known in Brandon for being the Baptist Sunday School teacher, but before that he had been a soldier and so was one of the first to receive his call up papers. Wounded in the fighting, Arthur was taken to a hospital in Rouen but sadly died. His death has affected some of the children. Hopefully Zeppelins and disease will not do likewise.