

## September 1915

It was during January of this year those dastardly Zeppelins attacked East Anglia. Then in the spring they bombed Bury St Edmunds and for us Brandon residents it all seemed too close for comfort. Zeppelins have been heard flying over the town at night so you can see why there is a fear they will bomb you while you sleep in your bed. Just one chink of light from someone's home will be enough to direct a bomb onto the town. Therefore it is in everyone's interest to prevent any light escaping from their home during the hours of darkness and the authorities are keen to use the latest Lighting Regulations to enforce this. These regulations are more commonly known as the "black out". Complying with the black out is making life difficult now the nights are drawing in.

The Baptist and Methodist churches have screened their windows in order to carry on with their evening services, but it has been more problematic for St Peter's where the windows are much larger. Reverend Wyatt has just declared the 6.30pm service at St Peter's will now take place at 3pm, so it is finished before dark. Schools in Brandon will finish earlier too. Ironically we will not see Mr Murrell's handiwork at cleaning the town clock face because it is no longer illuminated at night. These are the sacrifices made to comply with the black out. It comes with hidden dangers though. The posts recently put across the Avenue to stop vehicles travelling down there, will now have to be removed because they are a hazard to pedestrians who don't see them in the dark. Something bigger bumped into a lamp post in town and so the ironmonger, Mr Woodrow, is currently repairing that. You had best comply with the black out though because the authorities are keen to prosecute anyone who shows light at night. The honour of being the first ever person in Brandon to be prosecuted for this goes to Edith Clarke.

The time is 8.45pm, on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September. Police Constable O'Brien is walking his beat and notices that a Venetian blind in the bar room window of the White Hart Hotel has not been closed properly. Inside the bar room a light shines brightly. It also shines across the High Street and onto the building opposite. O'Brien had already warned the proprietor about showing light during black out and so he needs to speak to her again. He walks into the back yard of the hotel and is dismayed to see another blind not closed. The back yard is lit up like daytime. This is perfect for any passing Zeppelins to navigate their bombs onto the town. Edith Clarke runs the White Hart Hotel and O'Brien orders her to close her blinds. Edith's brother races around the hotel and promptly shuts them. For her part Edith protests that she purposely lights up the yard so her patrons can see properly at night and avoid bumping into things. This excuse does not wash with O'Brien and he summons her to appear before the Brandon magistrates. The magistrates agree with the constable, after all a few bashed shins are much preferable to being bombed in your bed, and she is fined five shillings.

For now we can sleep a little easier in Brandon. Our lads fighting in the trenches have had it much more difficult though. I think a catch up with them is long overdue ...