

## September 1916...

The recent fine weather has resulted in a good harvest, with the town's churches and chapels being adorned with much fruit and vegetables. Some of the produce is now being sold off to raise money. The river even obliged, with one angler reporting an average of 14lbs of fish each day over a twelve day period. This will do much to raise spirits following weeks of bad news coming out of the Somme. Then, to top it all off, we got news that one of our lads has just received the Military Medal.

James and Marianne Winner, of Church Road, are no different to many other Brandon parents, in that they have a son fighting in the war. Their son, Victor, was working as a clerk at the railway station when war was declared a couple of years ago. During his time there Victor saw at first hand the pomp and ceremony our lads received when they left the town to fight for King and Country. He became eager to enlist and join them. However, being just fourteen years old, he was turned away for being under age. His parents then forbade him from trying that stint again, but Victor is nothing if not determined. Also in Victor's favour, and unlike many of the other Brandon lads going off to enlist, he is big and strong. His physique belies his age, so when he tried to enlist again last year he lied about his date of birth, without his parents' knowledge I might add, which fooled the Army Medical Officer. The Army gladly welcomed Victor into their ranks without a second thought and then whisked him off for training with the artillery.

Victor writes regularly to his parents just to let them know all is well. By all accounts he has been the model soldier, being promoted to Bombardier in his first year. This week his letters announced he was going to be awarded the Military Medal, and at just sixteen he will be one of the youngest recipients of this award. The artillery usually aim their guns at the enemy lines, but Victor's gun sights were set skyward on this occasion and his target was a German observation aircraft, spying on our lads. His letters state,

*"We had a fine sight the other day. I do not know whether you will give credit to the goodness of it. It was a Bosche aeroplane trying to do a bit of drawing. Well anyway, our guns got on it, and I put one on its tail and set it on fire in the air. It was a grand sight to see it in the air in flames, but I pitied the poor chap inside. He must have been roasted before it touched the ground."*

*"We are still in action, and have been ever since the push started. We have just been watching a few Huns under cover of two Red Cross flags like some school children going to a tea fight, but they got a few 18-pounders into them, which soon made them disperse. I do not think this will last much longer at this rate. You ought to see him surrendering in small parties. I expect the prisoner camps will all be full up in England now, so I think a stray mine into one of the ships as they are crossing over would save the Government a few expenses."*

Based on his experiences so far, it seems Victor is not missing the life of a railway station clerk!