

# OPINION & COMMENT

**Eastern Daily Press**  
No 43,980

## It's a tribute to Andy's determination

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For decades British tennis has skulked about on the courts of heroic failure, fighting wonderfully hard but never really demonstrating we could compete with the best. That time is over.

Andy Murray's brilliant victory at the US Open over Novak Djokovic, the defending champion, shows that British tennis is now, as Murray himself put it, "in a very good place".

The match itself was a feat of both physical and mental endeavour, with Murray going two sets up only to see Djokovic win the next two and steal his momentum.

But just when we might have expected British tennis players of the past to fold, Murray came back with aplomb to take the final set and the championship. The match lasted almost five hours.

This has been a summer of sporting inspiration from our Olympic athletes, in no small way from Murray himself who won the men's singles gold medal, but the Scotsman's fight to win a grand slam epitomises everything that has been awesome about our sportsmen and women's efforts this summer.

This was, after all, Murray's fifth grand slam final. Before the four previous failed attempts, there were lost semi and quarter finals and years of endless practice and hard work.

So while we should obviously applaud Murray's achievement in becoming the first British man to win a tennis grand slam in 76 years, the first ever to win the Olympics and US open in the same year, we should take our inspiration from another part of his story.

It is his determination, commitment and hard work up until this point that we, and in particular our young people, can learn from as a country. That is a message that we need now more than ever.

## Care is needed

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We think that local health services are hugely important. We also think that high-quality health care is hugely important.

Ideally, the two should come together, providing top-quality care as close as possible to people's homes. So it is with some disquiet that we receive the news that emergency vascular patients in west Norfolk may have to be transported to Norwich or Cambridge for treatment.

There will be plenty of people who view this possible move with suspicion, fearing creeping centralisation of services and the gradual running down of what is on offer at local hospitals.

That is the thin end of a very unwelcome wedge.

But, ultimately, this is about people. It is about thousands of people who – if they require emergency vascular treatment – will no longer be able to get it locally.

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital has clearly made a robust case for retaining the service. We hope that those who make the final decision listen very carefully.

## Pretty as a picture

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Norfolk is a remarkably beautiful place without the help of human hands. But, when legions of green fingers work their magic, it becomes even more lovely.

The magnificent showing from Nelson's County in the 2012 Anglia in Bloom Awards demonstrates how much work has gone into sprucing up so many communities. The set-piece displays and colourful scenes do so much to show off where we live, boosting self confidence for locals and the impression gained by visitors.

The results are a fitting tribute to the many volunteers who make it happen, showing Norfolk's community spirit at its best – and all while battling a hosepipe ban and wet weather.

Yes, it is a cliché, but thanks are due to every blooming one of you.

## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY



### DINAH GOOM

**HIDING IN THE GRASS:** Dinah Goom was out photographing owls when she spotted this young fox. As soon as her camera clicked he turned tail and fled. If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

# Norwich and Norfolk accents are quite different

I recently published a column in the EDP where I mentioned the beautiful, Norfolk-accented BBC broadcasts by the late John Taylor. His son, our well-known novelist and biographer DJ Taylor, then wrote to me to say that he reckoned John had actually spoken with a Norwich accent, not a Norfolk one.

Many people will understand perfectly well what David Taylor means. The Norwich and Norfolk accents really are rather different, even if less so now than they used to be. In the old days, it was common for the country people of Norfolk to look down on the city people of Norwich because of their accents – and vice versa! The Dumpling and Canary mascots at Carrow Road – and in Banger's cartoons in the Saturday evening Pink'Un – represented realities everyone recognised.

This accent rivalry was a common topic of conversation in my childhood home. My mother grew up in the country, in the north Norfolk villages around Holt; and my father grew up in the city, in a terraced house in New Catton.

When my parents first met in the 1930s, my city grandparents' family used to tease my mother because she pronounced hundred "hundret" and naked "naket", pronunciations they didn't use. And, though she was too polite a young woman to tease them back, she actually looked down on them for the way they spoke too.

One feature she often mentioned in talking about this was that Norwich people "dropped their aitches". Mostly when you hear people using this phrase, they seem to

### PETER TRUDGILL



be implying that there is something rather reprehensible about the whole thing, as if aitches were catches in cricket. "It must be wrong," they claim, "to say ammer because hammer is spelt with an h."

But if you think about it, that doesn't make sense. Writing is a way of representing speech. If speech and writing don't match, it's because the writing system is inadequate. Our English spelling system is notorious for being a good representation of 15th century pronunciation, and hopeless as a way of indicating modern speech.

But the truth is that arguments about "correct" pronunciations are rationalisations for prejudices against accents with low status.

This is obvious from the fact that no one suggests it's "wrong" to drop the h in hour or honour, because not even posh speakers pronounce the h in these words. Nor does anybody claim that the h in words like night and thought should be pronounced. Lowland Scots do still pronounce the h in

these words, using a pronunciation usually shown as *nicht*, *thocht*. But their accents don't have high prestige – in Scotland, *thocht* actually has lower status than the more widespread pronunciation without an h.

But it's quite true that during the 20th century, h-dropping was not heard out in the Norfolk countryside. It was a feature which was typical of the Norwich accent – in the city you might well be called Arbo if your name was Herbert. The reason for this rural-urban difference is well understood by linguists and geographers. Languages change all the time, and changes which begin life in urban areas jump from one town to another, and only later move out into the countryside. H-dropping is an innovation in English which started in London some centuries ago. It then spread out gradually from there – it hasn't reached Tyneside or Scotland yet – arriving in the more important cities first.

So these days it's much less common for the Dumpling to look down on the Canary about h-lessness because, predictably, some Dumplings have now started to drop their aitches too, although none of us, urban or rural, do it nearly so often as the Cockneys.

Fascinatingly, we have also recently been presented with the phenomenon of younger people – are they all under 40? – who are so worried about making the "mistake" of dropping their aitches that they have started calling the letter h "haitch".

■ Peter Trudgill is president of Friends of Norfolk Dialect.

## WORDS FOR LIFE

Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever.  
Psalm 45:6

