

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Double death is tragic reminder of urgency of need to improve A47

It is not possible, nor is it fair, to comment on the circumstances that contributed to the crash on the A47 on Christmas Eve.

Whatever caused the incident, it is heartbreaking for those involved, and for their families and friends. The timing of the accident, as people were travelling to see their nearest and dearest for Christmas, heightens the tragedy of the event.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to the lady who is injured, and to all whose lives have been touched by this awful festive story.

We would also like to pay tribute to those who put themselves at risk, including the public and the emergency services, in a bid to save the people involved. Sadly, we have written stories and comments about crashes on the A47 far too many times.

The number of deaths and serious injuries on this road is no mere coincidence: it is because it is dangerous.

The quality and robustness of this major artery from Norfolk to the Midlands is unacceptably poor. There are junctions that desperately need to be upgraded, issues to iron out and – most startling – there is an obvious need for the road to be fully dualled.

Stretches of the A47 are not fit for purpose. They were designed for traffic levels that existed decades ago.

We were encouraged earlier this month when transport minister Stephen Hammond offered a shaft of light about future work on the A47. But we know better than to get carried away by such things, having swallowed too many empty promises.

This latest fatal crash should serve as a stark reminder to Mr Hammond of the need for safety improvements – and to all of us to maintain the pressure relentlessly until ministers finally do the right thing.

The spirit of Christmas

At this time of year, it's easy to forget that not everybody has the luxury of a comfortable Christmas surrounded by their family and with plenty of food to nibble at over the festive period.

But the sad truth is that, for some people who have fallen on hard times, Christmas is a time when it is really brought home to them what they do not have.

Fortunately, there are plenty of good-hearted folk in Norfolk who do not turn a blind eye to people with problems, but help make their Christmas that bit happier.

At the Great Yarmouth Open Christmas and the Norwich Open Christmas, volunteers served up free Christmas dinners to some of the county's most vulnerable people. Some of the people who tucked into the turkey were homeless, some have mental health problems and some are addicted to alcohol or drugs.

Some were lonely people, perhaps because of the death of a loved one and others were families who just don't have enough money to cope at Christmas. We salute those who gave up their time to help them out.

Royal touch is welcome

At the end of a momentous year, the Queen showed yet again just why she is so popular with the people of this nation.

While other people might have used a festive cold as an excuse to stay in the warm on Christmas Day, the Queen was determined to attend church – and give gathered well-wishers a lift.

As we saw during the summer of celebrations for the Golden Jubilee and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, her very presence is a boost. It was also wonderful to see the Duke of Edinburgh walking to the church – as he did last Sunday – having made a robust recovery from recent health problems.

For so many people, Christmas would not be the same without them.

WORDS FOR LIFE

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.
Isaiah 9:6



READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



ROBERT BUTTLE

MAJESTIC SIGHT: A stag and two youngsters in the fields at North Elmham. If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

How's this for a Norfolk quadruple negative?

PETER TRUDGILL

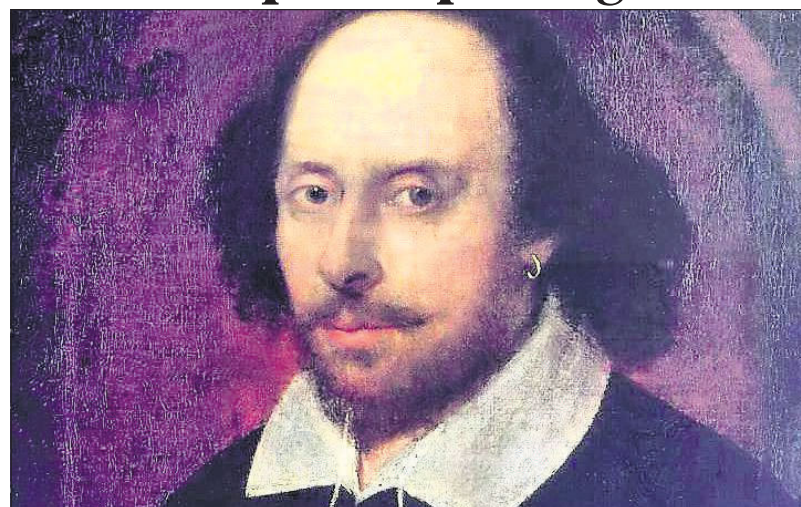
email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk



By the end of the second world war there were 20,000 courageous Poles in the RAF, and quite a few of them were here in Norfolk. Probably, though, not many local people have ever learnt much Polish, so here's a little language lesson – I apologise if it's too early in the morning.

The Polish sentence "Nigdy nie mogłem nigdzie żadnego znaleźć" literally means "Never not could – I nowhere none find". Or, as we say in Norfolk, "I couldn't never find none nowhere". "Double negative" doesn't do it – in Polish and in Norfolk, these are quadruple negatives. In Polish, you have to say it like that – in a negative sentence, everything that can be negative must be negative. It's known as grammatical agreement.

Linguists call this agreement "multiple negation". It's very common in the world's languages. You find it in French: "Je ne sais rien" 'I not know nothing'. It's always been normal in English too. King Alfred used it. Chaucer used it. Shakespeare, pictured, used it. And most modern native English speakers all round the world use it: "You ain't seen nothin' yet", "I can't get no satisfaction", "Went to Swaffham to do some troshen – din't do nothen". When that ol' Mrs W looked after Aunt Agatha's hens and they laid fewer eggs than usual, The Boy John reported that "Aunt Agatha she dornt suspect nobody o' nuthin". So it's



Norfolk dialect all right. But it's not just Norfolk. It's Pan-world English.

For the last 250 years, though, it hasn't been part of Standard English: "I couldn't ever find any anywhere" is the Standard English version. So people who don't like local dialects have tried to invent reasons for why multiple negation is "wrong".

They say if you could NOT find NONE, you must have been able to find SOME; and – as if English was algebra – "two negatives make a positive". Which is nonsense. If two negatives don't make a positive in French or Polish, they don't make a positive in Norfolk – or America or Australia – either.

This is just a desperate attempt to rationalise prejudice against dialects.

Of course, if you're attempting to write Standard English, you should avoid multiple negation.

But there's absolutely nothing wrong about it as such, just as there's everything right about it in Polish.

Polish and Norfolk people, though, have a lot more in common than just their grammar, and to this day there's nothing negative about our regard for those brave Poles.

■ What do you think? Email: EDPletters@archant.co.uk