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SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Presidential PR stunt does not change a thing over Falkland Islands

The open letter by Argentine president Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner does not change the fundamentals of the issue.

It brings the future of the Falkland Islands back into the public eye, and no doubt earns Ms Fernandez de Kirchner some Brownie points with her electors. After all, the response to General Galtieri's 1982 invasion of the islands showed just how popular the cause is with Argentinians.

But her approach continues to overlook the most important people of all – the 3,000 British citizens who live on the islands.

It is not, and never has been, a tug of war for possession of a clutch of windswept rocky outcrops in the South Atlantic. It is a battle for the lives and right to self-determination of the people.

They might be closer geographically to Buenos Aires, but they entirely identify with the UK.

And until that changes, it would be a betrayal of those inhabitants for any British government or prime minister to give them less than 100pc backing.

For Margaret Thatcher, that meant war. For David Cameron, that means a war of words.

Both approaches were right for the circumstances, and will give the Falkland islanders the continued security of knowing that out of sight does not mean out of mind. That does not change because of a PR stunt by the president of Argentina.

One thing is certain: 30 years after the horrors of the Falklands conflict, Britain and Argentina are no closer to finding common ground about the islands.

With both nations determinedly sticking to their viewpoints and believing in them, it seems likely that we will be saying the same thing in another 30 years.

Keeping fishery afloat

Fishing has been an integral part of north Norfolk life for centuries.

As an industry it has employed generations of hardy folk who have harvested crusty creatures from the depths of the sea in often harsh conditions.

The fleet has dwindled over the years, but there are still 500 people involved in catching, processing and supporting it, and it continues to add a unique flavour to life along the coast enjoyed by locals and visitors alike.

The Flag funding scheme in the area has £2.4m at its disposal and has begun reeling in a range of projects aimed at ensuring the industry does not just survive but thrives through a combination of equipment upgrades, finance help, and raising the profile of the fishery's past, present and future challenges – which could range from wind farms to marine conservation zones.

The main crustacean catches of crabs and lobsters have proved durable in adapting to their surroundings over millions of years. So investment to keep the industry alive, and not just a token tourist attraction, is both timely and welcome.

It never rains...

If ever there was a year that proved the old adage of "it never rains but it pours", then surely 2012 was it.

Until the end of March, there was a very real prospect of a crippling drought, with water levels so low that agricultural abstractors were holding worried meetings with environment chiefs and water company bosses about the impending crisis. What followed was an unprecedented nine-month deluge which, ironically, left some of those same farmers struggling to grow their crops in saturated soils. This spiralling unpredictability in our weather proves once again what a precious resource our water is – and serves as a warning that we must not take it for granted when supplies are abundant, but plan for the next dry season.

WORDS FOR LIFE

The Lord will work out his plans
for my life.
Psalm 138:8



READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY



RICHARD WOODHOUSE

EARLY MORNING LIGHT: Rocks off the beach at Happpisburgh. If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Strangers who made our great city what it is

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In the last 10 years or so, the population of Norwich has increased rapidly and enormously. Amazingly, there are now about 60pc more people than there used to be.

This sudden dramatic increase hasn't been the result of exceptionally high fertility on the part of young Norwich couples. And it isn't due to a sudden influx of people from rural areas around the city either. It's all down to immigration.

Some 40pc of the population of the city are now refugees and asylum seekers who have arrived from overseas. These immigrants don't look very different from Norfolk people and they are Protestant Christians. But they don't speak English. If you walk down St Benedicts or St Giles, you're almost as likely to hear people speaking Flemish or French as you are Norfolk English.

The immigrants have arrived in their hundreds from places like Antwerp, Ghent, Bruges and Lille, escaping from their Spanish Catholic persecutors, executioners and torturers. They are all foreigners – or "strangers" as they are called in 16th century English – for this is the late 1500s we're talking about.

It's interesting to try to imagine what it must have been like here in the city after the arrival of the Strangers. Overcrowded certainly. And multilingual. How did people



CULTURAL MIX: Historically, Norwich is a city influenced by immigration.

communicate? Did the Strangers already know some English? Were the Walloon French speakers able to speak Dutch to the Flemings? Could the Flemish people speak French? Did the indigenous Norwich people pick up any Dutch?

Norwich stayed a trilingual city for at least 200 years. French and Dutch were used in the city well into the 1700s. And many of us must have ancestors who came from the Low Countries. So surely this must have had some effect on our local dialect? "Dwile" – dishcloth, floorcloth, an English word used only in East Anglia – is certainly the same as the Dutch word

"dweil". And "lucam" – a long weavers' attic window – is from French "lucarne". What else?

Visitors to our city often wonder why – when London has Leicester Square, Grosvenor Square and Langham Place – Norwich has Palace Plain, St Andrew's Plain, Bank Plain, St George's Plain.

I was recently invited to go to Belgium, to the Royal Flemish Academy in Ghent, to talk about the influence of Dutch on East Anglian English. Around the corner from my hotel was an open area called Sint Veerleplein – Saint Veerle's Plain. You can be sure I mentioned that.