

# Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1870

## Vital that we talk about how much we are drinking

It's quite a shock to learn that, across Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire, almost 300,000 people are either heavy drinkers or regularly drink beyond the 'safe' levels recommended by the NHS.

But then, think about how many of us nip to the pub for a few after work or get home and open a bottle of wine.

It doesn't take much before the units tot up and the NHS levels are exceeded.

For most people, a nice tittle is just that – an enjoyable way to relax and unwind.

The danger comes when people start using alcohol to self-medicate or as a crutch, to get them through tough times and blot out things they would rather not think about or deal with.

As the story of Melanie Wallis shows, it can take quite a jolt for some people to realise that their alcohol consumption has become a problem.

In her case, she was very fortunate to have a pair of wonderful friends in Tim and Janette Kemp, who have been her lifeline and helped steer her away from the bottle.

Not everyone is so lucky. The deaths of more than 250 people in Norfolk in 2009 were attributed to alcohol and drink played a role in more than 100,000 hospital admissions.

It's important people talk about alcohol and their relationship with it, which can turn horribly destructive.

We welcome Alcohol Awareness Week and the Hair of the Dog campaign, because we have to stop the cheers turning to tears.

## Crab population fears

When you hear the word 'Cromer', what springs to mind? Certainly the pier and its pavilion, and possibly the wonderful fish and chips, but for most people Cromer crabs would undoubtedly top the list.

The crustaceans and the industry associated with them are synonymous with the town, and important not just for its economy and tourism, but also its heritage.

Fishermen are right to raise the alarm about the decline in the crab population.

There is inevitable concern that over fishing may be a cause, but there may be other factors, too. We need to know what the true crab population is, and what is happening to it.

We therefore fully support calls for a study into the issue, and anything that will help maintain this vital piece of Norfolk life.

## A special winter treat

This summer we held a "Norfolk is..." tourism campaign, urging readers to distil, in words, images or video, all that is best about our great county.

We were truly astonished by the response, so today we re-launch the campaign, but with a winter twist. We want you to share what Norfolk is for you at this time of year.

But don't delay. The exhibition opens on December 9, so get creative and let us know what you come up with.

## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A beautiful Highland cattle calf in Hickling. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

Picture: ANNE MARKS

## Well, these discourse markers can mean a lot of things

Peter Trudgill



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When we were about six years old, there was a joke which we thought was very funny: "Have you heard about the three deep holes? Well, well, well..."

I agree it's not very amusing, but a correspondent to the EDP seems not even to have heard of it. He is "irritated beyond bounds", poor chap, by the continuous use of the word "well" at the start of "almost every report on the news". He wants the word to be banned, unless it applies to a person's state of health, or a hole in the ground which supplies water. He doesn't say how he'll set about enforcing this ban – I suppose a short prison-sentence for any offending journalist might work.

But he has completely missed the point about the important job words like "well" play in English – or in any language. They're called discourse markers, and they have very important functions. There are rules about how to use them which we all know, even if we don't know we know them. You can sometimes hear foreigners using "well" incorrectly because they don't know what the rules are.

An American linguist called Deborah



■ Sheltering from bombs in Syria, above, may well cause a discourse marker response.

Schiffirin wrote a whole book called "Discourse Markers" which is devoted to a study of the rules involved in the usage of "well, oh, so, y'know, now, then, I mean". One of the jobs that "well" does is to act as a warning that a response to what another person has said is going to be less than satisfactory. If someone asks the time, you don't reply "well, it's four o'clock". But you might say "well, I'm not sure – my watch is slow".

"Well" can warn that a reply will be unsatisfactory because it expresses disagreement. If someone says "Norwich City have a got a great team", you might agree; but someone else might reply "well, I'm

not so sure about that". "Well" can show reluctance – "well, I don't really want to"; resignation – "well, all right then"; or uncertainty – "well, yes, I suppose that's right".

Imagine you're a reporter for the Today programme. You're sheltering from the bombs in Damascus. The studio in London asks for your analysis of the current Syrian situation. You feel that any 60-second answer you could possibly give will be utterly unsatisfactory for conveying the total complexity, uncertainty and horror of it all.

Don't you think you might begin by saying "Well, John...?"

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Be careful that you don't forget the Lord your God.  
Deuteronomy 8:11

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