

Eastern Daily Press

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Flood appeal helped hundreds and will leave a real legacy

Our coastline is one of our region's jewels. From the cliffs of Hunstanton to Great Yarmouth's Golden Mile, it attracts visitors from far and wide.

But while the North Sea is usually our benign friend, sometimes it shows its true power. December 5 last year was one such occasion, when the worst tidal surge for 60 years inundated homes and upended lives.

For many, the aftermath was devastating: homes swallowed by the sea, treasured possessions destroyed, peace of mind shattered. But despite the misery, something quite extraordinary emerged in its wake.

When we launched our flood appeal to help the victims of the surge, we knew our readers would rise to the occasion, and hoped that we might raise £50,000, but what followed stunned us all. The donations, large and small, kept coming, finally reaching an incredible £330,000.

But although that total is impressive, what matters most is the help it quickly offered hundreds of people. The case studies we print today show just what a difference those donations made to individuals along our coast.

We cannot say a big enough thank you to everyone who gave so generously.

Today, our coastline is back to its beautiful best, but we know the day will come when the flooding returns to our region, whether it is on our coast, or in our towns and cities, as happened this summer during sudden, heavy downpours.

The success of the flood appeal has shown that, together, we can make an immediate difference. The appeal's legacy is that we will be ready to help next time, too.

Remember Afghanistan

In recent weeks, all eyes have been on the Middle East, where aircraft from RAF Marham are taking the fight to the murderous fanatics of the so-called Islamic State (IS).

But long before that operation began – in fact, before even the 2003 invasion of Iraq – there has been the campaign in Afghanistan. And as one Marham squadron starts the offensive against IS, in a strange symmetry, it falls to another to bring British operations to a close in Afghanistan.

With the focus on Iraq and Syria, it is important we do not forget the other fight that is still going on – even if the burden is increasingly falling to the Afghans themselves.

Arguments over the rights and wrongs of military intervention will continue. But what is not in doubt is the dedication of those at the sharp end. And as our reporter Mark Nicholls hears, there are encouraging signs that their work is paying dividends. We must hope the progress continues once they return to Norfolk.

Much-loved attraction

It's wonderful news that work is starting today on a project which could eventually pave the way for the revival of one of Great Yarmouth's most loved attractions, the town's historic boating lake.

For generations, visitors and locals have flocked to the site. The memories it has helped generate will be endless.

To restore it to anything approaching its heyday would be a triumph for the town and the region.

We have our fingers crossed.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A watery sun rises over the dewy Falcon Meadow and Ditchingham Dam close to Bungay in this photograph by Andrew Atterwill. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Learn another language... but maybe not Mandarin Chinese

Peter Trudgill



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A lot of people are learning Mandarin Chinese these days. That seems like a good idea. It's the language with the most native speakers. English has the most non-native speakers, 500 million (with 350 million native speakers).

Mandarin is one of a number of languages called "Chinese" – there are at least six.

In Hong Kong, the local language isn't Mandarin but Cantonese, which is spoken by 70 million people. People speaking Mandarin and Cantonese can't understand one another at all.

It's a very good idea to discover what non-European languages can be like – they're often surprisingly different – and linguistic scientists are always happy when they hear about people learning a foreign language.

Everybody should learn at least one. And it really is best if you can learn it properly, so you can read it and talk to people. But that's hard work. Learning a language is a massive task. Perhaps pupils passing GCSE French or German or Spanish with a high grade should be awarded two GCSEs, not just one.

It would really be excellent if all British people could study, learn and be able to



■ Mandarin Chinese has the most native speakers but it is a pretty difficult language to master says Peter Trudgill. Picture: LIBRARY

speak, or at least understand and read, other European languages like French, German, Spanish, Italian, Swedish.... With these languages, you have a good chance of ultimately being able to read them successfully.

With Mandarin the chances are rather low. The writing system makes that enormously difficult. The language itself isn't particularly hard, though you are starting from scratch, unlike with western European languages where you will know lots of the words already. But the Chinese writing system is so complex that even Chinese-speaking children aren't able to read a newspaper satisfactorily until quite late.

Of course, if you want to go and do business in China, it would be helpful to speak Mandarin. But unless you're very good indeed, it would be much safer to use a professional interpreter as well.

So why don't you learn, say, German or Spanish? You'll find it a lot easier. You can readily travel to Germany or Austria or Switzerland, or to Spain or South America, read the newspapers there, find out what people are thinking, discover their literatures, and get some insight into the way they look at things.

Unless you're a really brilliant language learner and are willing to devote years of your life to learning the language, you're unlikely to get that far with Mandarin.

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The pains of toil bring gain, but mere talk brings nothing but poverty.
Proverbs 14:23

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