OPINION and comment

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A time to remember those who fought and fell for our freedom

It is perhaps the sombre familiarity of Remembrance Sunday – its rituals, its sounds, its words – that is its most affecting aspect. Ever since the first Armistice Day in 1919 the country has come together for this most mournful and reflective of occasions.

And every time, those same, familiar acts – performed around the same, simple stone monuments – leave observers with a sense that is as profound as it is awe-inspiring. This year, as last year – and the year before that, and so on, back to 1919 – saw the ranks of surviving veterans grow thinner. We have lost all our First World War survivors. Those who fought in the second are becoming fewer. While remembering the dead, we must be thankful, also, to the living – while we still can.

The fact that the weekend's ceremonies fall a century on from the outbreak of the Great War has added a slight symmetry to the occasion, and has perhaps heightened interest, as evidenced by recent projects to add "forgotten" names to memorials and create new monuments.

But otherwise, the day is largely as it has always been. And that is something for the country to be proud of. The weekend began with news of an alleged Islamist terror plot, said to have been targeting remembrance events. Yet the crowds turned out. The ceremonies went ahead.

The alleged plot reminds us that the world is still a deadly place, but it also reminds us that we have lived through such threats before. And our remembrance rituals have endured. This is a day that does not glorify war. It does not judge those who fought – or did not fight. It does not make arguments about the wrongs and rights of particular conflicts. It simply remembers those who fought and who fell.

Significant development

Could this be the moment Westminster finally puts its money where its mouth is? David Cameron is today due to make an announcement that road improvement works on the A47 can go ahead.

Every resident of this region will know just how many twists and turns the campaign for upgrades to this route has taken over the years. They will know not to count any chickens just yet. Many questions remain. How much will be spent? Where will it be spent? And on what? And when will work start? How many more deaths and serious injuries will occur before then? But we do accept that this is a significant development. This is a Prime Minister making a commitment, giving his word. We must ensure he keeps it.

Come on, Caroline!

As any Strictly Come Dancing fan will tell you, this is when the competition starts to get serious – well, as serious as it can get. After last night's show, the action moves to Blackpool's Tower Ballroom for next weekend. And with just nine pairs left, each contestant will think they have a shot at waltzing off with the Glitterball trophy come next month's grand final. So it wonderful to see Caroline Flack still in there, flying the flag for her home county. She is planning to spend Christmas in Norwich this year. Let's all hope that when she returns, it is with the trophy in tow.

■ The setting sun lights the reeds with a golden glow at RSPB Minsmere in this photograph by Liz Murton. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

I stand by my views on local place name pronunciations

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Some people tell me they're puzzled about my stance on language change.

On the one hand, I'm fascinated by current sound changes, like the two th sounds merging with f and v in "fing" and "bovver", and don't disapprove of them. On the other, I'm against changes in local place names, such as saying Heigham, Norwich, as "Hy-um" instead of the correct "Hay-um".

My position is easy to explain. The transformation of th is a natural, spontaneous sound change. The disappearance of k before n in all English words such as know and Knapton, which started in the 16th century, was a natural sound change. The change in all Anglo-Saxon words like cu and nu to Modern English cow and now, which took many centuries, was a natural sound change.

These are part of natural linguistic evolution. The sounds of all languages change gradually over time. This mostly happens without anybody noticing, and certainly without anyone intending it. And all instances of a given sound are affected, without exception. Why? Well, languages are just like that.

Sound change is a powerful, inherent, unstoppable feature of human languages. If

you could hear Chaucer speaking, you'd barely recognise it as English.

His version of "When April with its sweet showers" was "Whan that April with his shoures soote", which sounded like "Hwan that Ahprill with hiss shoo-ress sawta."

Sound change is part of what gives us different dialects and, ultimately, different languages. If it wasn't for change, English and German would still be the same language. Even Welsh and Bengali would be the same language – they were 6,000 years ago.

Wrongly changing an individual name from, say, Heigham to Hy-um has got nothing to do with natural sound change.

It's simply people guessing from the spelling how an unfamiliar name is pronounced

and getting it wrong. When people wrongly say my name as Trudge-ill, I understand why – the spelling is ambiguous. But when I tell them what the correct pronunciation is, I expect them to use it – it's my name, after all.

One thousand two hundred years ago, Heigham was Heccham, pronounced "Hetch-ham". Our modern "Hay'um" came about through natural sound changes which occurred gradually over many centuries.

Any 21st century change to Hyum would be the sudden result of conscious but faulty decision-making by people from outside Norwich, encountering this particular name in writing before hearing it, guessing how to say it, and getting it wrong.

But we won't let that happen.

■ Too many people mispronounce the name of the popular park in Norwich as 'Hy-um' rather than the correct 'Hay-um'.
Picture: **LIBRARY**