

# Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1870

## We're not prepared to just sit by while others go in need

There are those who talk about community spirit as a thing of the past, who bemoan a modern society where people are said to live isolated lives, rarely even knowing the names of their neighbours, with few going out of their way to help others. There are two stories in today's newspapers to which we would direct those pessimists, which tell a quite different tale.

One is that of David Daniels, who had always lived in Norfolk but died 80 miles from home, in Essex, where he had been taken for specialist hospital treatment following a devastating flat fire. To save him from a "pauper's burial" far from home, his local community rallied to raise the money to bring him back.

The other involves the Costessey Day Centre, which was threatened with closure without new funding. No sooner had we reported this news, over the weekend, then we and the centre were inundated with offers from people wanting to help. Crucially, the volunteers also applied for a grant from our own Fighting for the Vulnerable campaign, and thanks to the generosity of strangers, and the support from our fund, the group's future now seems secure. Both stories show the strength of the ties that bind our region's society together. East Anglians are not prepared to sit by while others – even strangers – go in need.

The Costessey story also shows the remarkable power that our Fighting for the Vulnerable campaign wields. It is there as a fighting fund, a rapid response that can swing into immediate action, to create change within days, or even hours, when a desperate need arises. But while we are proud of the role that we have played – and will play again in the future – we are truly humbled by the response of others in these two cases. We salute them.

## Goodbye to winter

For those – surely most of us – who spent any time outdoors over the weekend, the new findings from a new scientific study, that spring is creeping ever earlier in the calendar, will have been met with a flash of recognition.

To reach their conclusions, researchers have been going over the records assembled by a quite remarkable Norfolk family – Robert Marsham and his descendants – who, for 200 years monitored the first indications of spring. The factors behind these apparent shifts in the season warrant further investigation and may bring some alarm as to the state of our climate and environment.

But after the weekend in which our region has just revealed, most will, firstly, want to enjoy this magical moment across East Anglia as winter tips, almost imperceptibly, into spring. We can start to bid goodbye to another winter and look forward to the promises ahead.

## Caution is required

The prospect of the lynx once again stalking our countryside after an absence of 1,300 years is, without doubt, an intriguing one. But the project on which we report today is one which must be met with great caution. East Anglia boasts a splendid – but delicate – ecosystem. It is also farming country, through and through. We would be wary of anything that might upset either of these two great strengths of our region. But we look forward to hearing more about this ambitious "rewilding" scheme.

## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

# iwitness24



■ Taking flight . . . This mallard at Rockland St Mary was captured on camera by Julia Tynan. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## The times they aren't a-changin' for Norfolk dialogue



email: [newsdesk@archant.co.uk](mailto:newsdesk@archant.co.uk)

There are those who erroneously believe that Norfolk is flat. People who grew up in Norwich know different. You may be familiar with the old city rhyme which goes: "The cart stood still and the wheels wuz goin round, A-goin up o' Long John Hill a-com'n down".

Long John Hill in Lakenham no longer holds the terrors it used to. If you drive up it these days in your car, or whizz up it on a modern lightweight multiple-gear bicycle, it's no kind of challenge. But in the old days, if you wanted to negotiate it with a heavily-laden cart pulled by a tired old horse, that was another story.

But what about the words of the rhyme itself? What's all this a-coming and a-going? Specifically: why is it a-coming rather than just coming?

This is an ancient grammatical feature which the Norfolk dialect has retained, while the Standard English dialect has lost it. Linguists call it 'a-verbing'.

All over the world English speakers still know about it from the words of nursery rhymes like "Cry Baby Bunting, daddy's gone a-hunting"; traditional folk-songs like Frog went a-courtin'; and even from more recent songs like Bob Dylan's The



■ Long John Hill in Lakenham gives its name to a peculiar old city rhyme.

Picture: STEVE ADAMS

times they are a-changin'.

The origin of the form lies way back in the history of our language.

In "he is hunting", the "is hunting" part is known technically as a progressive verb. The very earliest forms of English didn't have progressives: the languages related to English still don't – in Norwegian "vi drikker" means both 'we drink' and 'we are drinking'.

The English progressive was an innovation which developed about a thousand years ago out of expressions like "he is on hunting", ie in the act of hunting, where hunting was a noun, as in "the hunting of deer is prohibited".

Speakers would say things like "He was on hunting of the deer". But over time the unstressed word 'on' was reduced in pronunciation, resulting in a-hunting; and eventually even that a- was lost in the standard dialect.

In our dialect, though, we have retained it. And, not only that, we have also retained the "of", albeit in the local form of "on", so we say "He was a-hunten on'em".

That's why, if you see an old fella trying to bike up Long John Hill on a heavy old velocipede, you might find yourself calling out: What on earth d'you think you're a-doin on?

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Never hold a grudge against any of your people. Instead, love your neighbour as you love yourself.  
Leviticus 19:18

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