

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

We need eyes in the skies to help keep our region safe

It has become a cliché to talk of how much policing has changed in recent years.

But the over-statement of this point does not mean it is not a valid one.

Good, old-fashioned police work still goes on as much as ever, but it goes on in such different ways as to be almost unrecognisable from how forces operated a few decades ago.

So much crime is now tackled online, in the science laboratory and, yes, from the air.

So it is troubling that there are moves afoot which could reduce our region's level of police air cover.

Yes, we are fortunate enough to live in a comparatively safe part of the country.

Yes, police helicopters have helped to revolutionise law enforcement in more densely populated, larger, urban areas of Britain.

But these points do not mean that there is any less need for this resource in East Anglia.

Indeed, our vast, often scarcely-populated, countryside, its geography and its roads – or lack of them – make it ideally suited to this region.

It does seem that savings across our public sector must be met. And a police helicopter is, it must be acknowledged, a ferociously expensive asset.

But it is also a vital one. One that we have grown to rely on. And one, it seems to us, which will only grow in usefulness as time goes on.

We are assured of an efficient and effective service, regardless of these changes. But it is difficult to see how the cover we receive will not be degraded by the policy. That is a grave concern.

A great significance

This is a country with a long memory. There seem to be few anniversaries of historical events which pass without being recorded and remembered – particularly, it sometimes seems, in our corner of the UK.

But there are surely few from quite so long ago as the sealing of Magna Carta – 800 years ago today. And there are certainly few – if any – which are quite so significant. The precise implications and intricacies of the document and the event is something which we will leave for others to discuss, debate and dissect.

But it is worth all of us remembering – and being thankful for – what this act did represent: the establishment of some form of defence against government power.

Not all countries have been so fortunate as ours.

We are lucky to have this event in our national story and to have such a long memory.

Keep them coming

We have been amazed by not just the quantity but also the quality of the nominations we have seen for our Stars of Norfolk and Waveney 2015.

These awards are designed to celebrate this region's finest. And that is certainly what our entries so far represent.

There is still plenty of time for others to be put forward. We sincerely look forward to hearing from more of you.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Peter Jarvis sent us this image of Ashtree Farm drainage windpump, near Great Yarmouth, on a sunny morning. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

To stress or not to stress? It used to be so easy in the past

Peter
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There is a controversy about the word controversy. Should it be CONtrovery or conTROVersy? There is also controversy about the word contribute: at least one EDP reader finds the pronunciation CONtribute irritating and feels it should be conTRIBute. Some objectors even claim that CONtribute is an "Americanism" (it isn't) – which of course means that they don't like it.

It might help to reduce this irritation a little if we can look at this issue historically, because what is going on here is actually part of a very long-term historical trend. As far back as about 1000 BC, our ancestral language, Proto-Germanic, regularised stress on the first syllable of all words, something which distinguished it from all the other contemporary Indo-European languages like Proto-Celtic and Proto-Italic, which never did this.

By the time of Old English, say AD 500, this rule still applied – the norm for all words was stress on the first syllable unless that was a prefix, as in be-neath or be-fore. And this is still the system today in our basic English vocabulary.

But in 1066, the Normans invaded and starting messing things up. English began



■ We can blame the Normans for the inconsistencies in our pronunciation.

to borrow words from French – which descended from Proto-Italic and did not have the first-syllable stress rule.

The word contribute was borrowed into English in the late 1300s. This, and the many other words like it, complicated the originally straightforward English word-stress system, not least because stress could also shift as between related forms like contribute and contribution.

Ever since these French borrowings arrived, there has been a tension in the English language between the original Germanic system and the upstart French system. There has also been a tendency for the English language to try and resolve this tension by fitting inconvenient French-origin words into the natural

Germanic system: there's been a drive to shift to pronunciations like CONtribute, with stress on the first syllable. Balcony was pronounced balCONy until the 1920s, but is now BALcony. Other borrowed words which used to have stress on the second syllable include comPENsate, concENtrate, conTEMplate, and reCONcile.

But, to be honest, things aren't quite so simple as this. The tension between the two systems actually leads to all sorts of contradictions and complications. It used to be more usual to say CONtrovery, as it still is in the USA. But nowadays a majority of people in this country say conTROVersy. I wonder if this Britishism irritates Americans.

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Your unflinching love is better than
life itself; how I praise you!

Psalms 63:3

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