

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Health warning: we must do everything to protect our GPs

For most of us, universal, free health care is something that we take for granted.

We may have a long wait in a GP surgery or face a six-week delay for a hospital appointment, but ultimately we get the treatment we need – and it is almost always excellent.

However, it is no longer something that has a double-locked future: our health services are under unprecedented strain.

Today we expose the severity of the storm that is raging around GP services, which are being threatened by a simple yet chilling equation: more patients plus fewer doctors equals breaking point.

It is a situation which everybody knew was coming, but which has not been planned for. And the results of that lack of foresight are burnt-out GPs and “no vacancies” signs on their surgeries.

Beyond that, we will see doctors leaving the profession and surgeries closing. It is not scaremongering to say it, merely the inevitable effect of the cause.

The government is doing something to try to boost recruitment, but the early signs are not good.

That may be because people are not enamoured by the prospect of working 70 hours a week in a job where one mistake is a potential catastrophe.

Whatever the reasons are, all sides must work together to find a solution: to make the profession more attractive and to relieve the strain on our GPs.

For, while we all get frustrated at waiting rooms and waiting lists, there are surely not many of us who would relish the looming threat of a private health service.

So vital to keep active

Obesity is one of the great health challenges of our time, with predictions of a huge toll on our wellbeing, and on the financial future of the NHS. And when it comes to children, some parts of our region have some of the highest obesity rates in England.

So today's research, from a Norfolk-based company, looking at how school children experience a big loss of fitness over the summer holiday, is of real significance.

At first reading, the report makes for worrying reading, suggesting that, on average, children simply are not active enough during the long break, and their health is suffering as result. But it can also be looked at as having some positive news, with the suggestion that schools have a positive impact on the fitness of their pupils.

This shows why sport, and fitness more generally, is so important in our schools. We must resist the pressures some feel under to give the subject lower priority under the ever-increasing demand to prioritise good grades in academic subjects above all else.

But it also shows the challenge facing parents, families and the wider community to ensure children are active out of school.

Bond is solid as a rock

Sometimes people and places are connected by the most unlikely of things.

Take the towns of Thetford and Nagawa in Japan, two places which on the surface have little in common.

For starters, settlements in Thetford date at least as far back as the fourth century – Nagawa was founded in 2005.

But the two communities have created a continent-spanning friendship on a foundation of flint and obsidian.

It's a partnership which will put Thetford at the centre of the archaeological world next week when a host of experts converge on the town to take part in an international conference.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ The Happisburgh lighthouse in a sea of barley, photographed by Peter Jarvis. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Julian's message shows just how English has changed

Peter
Trudgill



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

Norwich has had its share of famous people, but one of the very best known is a woman who was born as long ago as 1342. We are not sure when she died, but it was possibly exactly 600 years ago, in 1416.

She is variously known as Julian of Norwich, Dame Julian, Lady Julian, and Juliana, but we don't know what her real name was.

She was a mystic who chose to become an anchoress and lived walled up in a cell attached to St Julian's Church, just off King Street in Norwich; the name we use for her now is simply derived from the name of the church. She was probably a Norwich girl, and was possibly educated by nuns at nearby Carrow Abbey. Julian is famous for her religious work “Revelations of Divine Love”, which is thought to be the first book written in English by a woman.

The Revelations were called “shewings” in her 14th-century English; and a look at the original text can tell us a lot about the extent to which languages can change over the centuries. The most famous passage in the Revelations goes: “But Jesus, that in this vision enformid me of all that me nedyth, answerid by this word, and seyde: Synne is behovabil, but al shal be wel, and



■ Candles are lit at the Julian Centre in Norwich.

Picture: STEVE ADAMS

al shal be wel, and al manner of thyng shal be wele.”

“Behovable” meant necessary or useful; and “all that me nedyth” meant everything that I need.

The pronunciation of English has changed radically in the last 600 years, and if we could hear Julian reading from her book now, we would have some trouble understanding her. To reconstruct what she would have sounded like, we have to imagine her saying something like: “ahl shull bay well and ahl munner of thingg shull bay well”. She would have

pronounced “thing” with the original hard g on the end, as people in Liverpool, Manchester, and Birmingham still do.

Mediaeval English often sounds more poetic to us than it would have done to Julian's contemporaries: essentially, the message she was reporting Jesus as communicating to her in her visions was that “everything is going to be all right”. But even the citizens of 15th-century Norwich would have appreciated the beauty of the phrasing of: “All shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well”.