

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Tenneh's inspiring story showed how much you all care

Whenever EDP readers are asked to dig deep to help people in need at home and abroad, you always respond in an incredibly generous way.

Over the years we have launched many appeals following natural disasters and personal tragedies in our region and around the globe.

The amazing outpouring of support and warmth has rarely been as clearly shown as when we highlighted the story of little Tenneh Cole.

It was 20 years ago that the young girl from Sierra Leone's world fell apart when she got a bullet in her head.

The most likely explanation is that it came from an assault rifle fired into the air by a crazed rebel in the troubled country.

Tenneh was rescued by the charity Hope and Homes for Children, run by Beccles-born Col Mark Cook and his wife Caroline.

They contacted former EDP deputy editor James Ruddy, who ensured Tenneh's heart-rending story was told.

About £60,000 was given by EDP readers to fly Tenneh to this country for life-saving surgery.

Now two decades after the mercy mission, James has been back to Africa to meet Tenneh and hear how she has turned into a tall and dignified young woman.

Starting today and going on during this week, James will be telling more of her amazing story, sharing how you helped to create a new life for thousands of other desperate children and looking at the Norfolk-inspired work going on in Sierra Leone to fight the scourge of Ebola.

We will be asking for more help for future generations – and know you will answer the call once more.

Step in right direction

There is no single answer to completely turning around Norfolk's children's services department.

It was rated as inadequate in 2013 and that was deemed to still be the case when inspectors carried out a review last year.

While recognising that it certainly will not fix everything, the news that the county council is to set up a new academy to recruit and train social workers is to be welcomed.

Attracting the right staff and retaining them has proved a major challenge for the department. Agency staff have had to plug holes and the lack of consistency and continuity will inevitably affect performance.

The department deals with very difficult and sensitive situations. Social workers and those they deal with need to have a strong bond of trust, which only comes over time.

Union officials understandably highlight how increasingly difficult the job of a social worker is becoming and claim the academy is not the panacea.

However, it is certainly a step in the right direction and deserving of all our support.

A victory to be proud of

Our region has a true champion in 18-year-old Alfie Hewett.

The Norwich tennis star's dream of winning a major tournament came true on Saturday when he served, sliced and smashed his way to victory in the men's wheelchair doubles final at Wimbledon with partner Gordon Reid.

The look of exaltation on Hewett's face after the final shot was played told a thousand words – it was a moment of pure joy he'd worked for since he was a young boy.

Hewett was diagnosed with Perthes Disease aged just six and has overcome fatigue, leg spasms and back pain to claim his sport's highest crown. We wish him every success at next month's Rio Olympics.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A Little Owl at Wolterton photographed Paul Laurie. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

How the meaning of words has changed over time

Peter
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A number of people have asked me what I think about the word decimate. I'm not sure I think anything very much about it, but here are a few things I do know.

The word was originally borrowed into English from Latin and used as a technical term when writing about Roman history, with a very specific meaning. The first record of it being used in English comes from 1591, when it was employed in the context of the Roman practice of executing every tenth soldier, chosen by lot, as a punishment for desertion. The Latin word was *decimare*, which was derived from the Latin word for 10, *decem*.

Quite soon afterwards, in 1626, it was being used in English in a more general, non-Roman sense of removing or destroying one in every 10 of anything. And very soon after that, from 1660 onwards, we find it being used in English in an even more general sense which is not precisely connected to the number 10, where the meaning is something like "to reduce or destroy drastically" or simply "to devastate or ruin". This is now, as the Oxford English Dictionary says, "the most usual sense" of the word in modern English.

The reason people ask me about



■ The word 'decimate' was borrowed into English from Latin - but its meaning has changed quite considerably.

decimate is because this "most usual" meaning is a usage which supporters of the etymological fallacy do not like. They reckon that it is wrong to talk of, say, fishing stocks in the Wensum being decimated unless you have carried out a scientific study which shows that 10pc, no more and no less, of the fish in the river have been lost.

But this is not what decimated means any more – and has not meant for more than 300 years. The fact is that words mean what they mean, and you cannot change that by appealing to what they

used to mean in Latin 2,000 years ago. Even the supporters of the etymological fallacy still call the last month of the year December, even though it isn't the tenth month.

All English speakers know what decimate really means. If we hear reports that the Ipswich Town squad have been decimated, we are much more likely to suppose that many of them have been struck down by flu rather than that one tenth of the squad have been chosen by lot and executed after losing 5-1 at home to Norwich City.