

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

May's vision of Brexit will not all be in her power

The Conservatives have reason to feel upbeat as they conclude the main party conference circuit in Birmingham this week.

They appear to be keeping most of their splits beneath the surface, they avoided a prolonged leadership battle and they find themselves still in power.

The issues and policies discussed in the conference hall, and by ministers at fringe events this year, matter as the party has a small majority and the power to act.

Prime minister Theresa May kicked off the conference with an assured and well-received speech to a supportive hall.

She made it clear that the formal process for leaving the European Union would be started by next March, and that controls over immigration would be a priority.

But agreements post-Brexit will depend on Brussels too. That is politics after all. Not all of it will be in her control.

Leading Brexiteer Boris Johnson said ahead of conference that his policy was for Britain to have its cake and eat it.

All the voters – both those who opted to leave and those who opted to remain – would agree that we should be fighting for the best deal which respects the people's will to leave the European Union and serves our interests.

It is early days for the prime minister. It will be long after the stands and chairs are packed away that we will find out if she can deliver on this vision.

And in reality we are not much the wiser about what "Brexit means Brexit" actually means as the curtain rises on a conference which is her biggest moment as leader yet.

It's a flight we fancy

Flybe's announcement that Norwich to Heathrow is one of 12 new routes it is looking at as Heathrow expansion becomes more likely is a tantalising prospect.

Heathrow itself is a pretty uninspiring destination for tourists – unless watching passenger planes is your bag. But it is a gateway to much of the world.

In this part of the world, we have some great single-hop places to visit from Norwich Airport, plus the precious flights to Amsterdam Schiphol, which connect us to locations galore.

But in this game, less is definitely not more. There are still countless occasions when we drive to further-flung airports to get flights. How much better would it be to cut the tedious travel out with a swift flight to Heathrow, then onwards?

The other aspects, which are not insignificant, are the potential economic spin-off of keeping more money in the area and being able to exploit the greater marketing opportunities.

There's a long way to go before Norwich to Heathrow would become a reality. But it's a journey that seems to be well worth taking.

Some wonderful stories

In these days of text messages, Facebook statuses and Twitter posts, some people fear for our young people's ability to write fluently, elegantly and at length.

Judging by the entries to the Write On Norfolk creative writing competition, which The EDP ran in conjunction with Norfolk County Council, these concerns may be misplaced, as readers can see for themselves in today's special souvenir supplement which prints the winning entries in full.

The judges were right to be deeply impressed by the skills shown by these young people, who put down their electronic devices and wrote some wonderful stories and poems. We offer them all our warmest congratulations.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A beautiful crane photographed at Pensthorpe by Martin Sizeland. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Believe it or not, English was once a minor language

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In 1600, English was a minor language in the world, with fewer than four million native speakers.

It didn't have any important role as a foreign or second language outside the British Isles. English was basically just the native language of the indigenous population of most of England, and the south and east of Scotland.

In 1600 it wasn't spoken in most of Cornwall, where they spoke Cornish, or in Welsh-speaking parts of Shropshire and Herefordshire.

Ireland was mainly Irish Gaelic speaking; nearly all of Wales was Welsh speaking; natives of the Highlands and Hebridean Islands of Scotland spoke Gaelic; Orkney and Shetland inhabitants spoke Scandinavian Norn; Manx was the language of the Isle of Man, and on the Channel Islands they spoke Norman French.

During the 1600s this situation changed dramatically, with an explosive spread of English across the Atlantic Ocean. This process led in the end to the death of very large numbers of the indigenous languages of the Western Hemisphere.

The history of the anglicisation of the Western Hemisphere is complicated,



■ Jamestown in Virginia, USA, where the first sizeable group of native English speakers outside the UK was established. Picture: AP/JOE FUDGE

involving competition between Spanish, Dutch, French, and English. Some of the expansion was the result of large-scale, planned, official attempts at colonisation.

Other English-speaking settlements happened as a result of haphazard settlements by refugees, pirates, runaway slaves, sailors, shipwrecked mariners and passengers, and deserters from the English army of Oliver Cromwell which had captured Jamaica from the Spanish in the 1650s.

The first place where any sizeable group of native speakers of English was successfully established outside the British Isles was the 1607 Jamestown settlement in Virginia, in what is now the USA. This successful colony had been preceded by an unsuccessful one on

Roanoke Island (now in North Carolina), which had been organised by Sir Walter Raleigh in the 1580s. In 1587 the governor of the Roanoke colony returned to England for help, leaving 117 colonists behind. He was delayed by the Spanish Armada and was not able to return until 1590, only to find the settlement had been abandoned.

No one knows what happened to the colonists: their fate is a mystery. But one theory has it that they assimilated with a group of local Native American Indians: there is a tradition that the modern Lumbee Indians of North Carolina are their descendants. Some reports even suggest that when the Lumbee were first encountered by Europeans, they were already speaking English...