

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Now is the time to give something back and be a volunteer

It's something that most of us, at one time or another, have vowed to do.

But excuses are often made, and more pressing issues put first – and volunteering slips down the list of priorities. After all, between work, families, hobbies and – at a stretch – a social life, we often feel as though time is not on our side.

Most of us know, though, that we could probably find an hour somewhere in our weeks to squeeze in something extra, whether by sacrificing 60 minutes on the sofa or setting the alarm a little bit earlier.

Voluntary Norfolk is hoping to tap into the fresh mindset that comes with the turn of a year as it launches a campaign to encourage more people into volunteering.

And we are backing the campaign, with a drive to encourage you to Make a Difference in 2017.

With a huge range of roles and locations, and as little as an hour a week required, there's a volunteering role for everyone.

From having a chat with someone on their own, to helping an elderly person out of touch with digital technology get connected, there's dozens of charities in need of an extra pair of hands.

Volunteering is an opportunity to meet new friends, learn skills, have different experiences and know that you are giving back. But, most importantly, it can be life-changing for those you choose to help. So if it's something you've been considering – don't put it off any longer. Now is your chance.

That hour on a Thursday evening could mean more than you know to someone in need.

Shameful behaviour

Policing Norwich on a Saturday night must be a difficult job at the best of times.

But what officers had to put up with during Saturday's New Year's Eve celebrations is just unacceptable.

Seventy-five people started 2017 behind bars, which, as chief inspector Lou Provart rightly said, is shameful.

And while that figure appears to be staggeringly high, it's concerning to hear it is not out of line with previous years.

But what makes matters worse this time, is that several officers were assaulted, leaving one with a fractured jaw.

It's difficult to comprehend what must go through someone's mind to turn violent on a night of celebration.

Either way, the tables have turned, and it's now those people who spent the night in custody who can expect to feel the long arm of the law.

Their alleged offences include violent crime, robbery and sexual assault. And while those found guilty will no doubt say alcohol played a role in their actions, it is no excuse. Today, the pain of a hangover may have subsided for some, but there could be further headaches ahead as they find themselves appearing in court.

Get well soon, Ma'am

Hundreds of people were left disappointed after the Queen was too ill to attend the New Year's Day church service at Sandringham.

But there was some good news for the Royal watchers.

The Princess Royal told the crowds that her mother was getting better.

Buckingham Palace said the Queen was still recuperating from the heavy cold she developed before Christmas and had decided not to attend the event at St Mary Magdalene Church.

But the Duke of Edinburgh, recovered from his own cold, was well enough to attend the ceremony. We hope Her Majesty will soon be well enough to join him.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A robin encountered at Felbrigg Hall in the freezing conditions and fog. Picture by Richard Farrow. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Unique way of looking at how illogical language can be

Peter
Trudgill



email: newsdesk@archant.co.uk

French-speaking people have been known to claim that French is a very logical language. The implication seems to be that French is more logical than other languages.

It isn't. Can you see anything logical about a language where 'I go' is "je vais" but 'we go' is "nous allons"?

The fact is that languages are not logical systems. If they were, logicians would not have had to develop their own systems of formal logical representation.

Languages are linguistic systems which evolved for human beings to think with, to communicate with, and to form social relationships with. And they have to be of a form which the human brain can cope with – which it can learn and operate.

Some people try to find arguments against linguistic features which they don't like by using pseudo-logical arguments: "If you say I COULDN'T find NONE, you must mean you COULD find SOME" – as if English was algebra, where two negatives make a positive.

Strangely, we never see this pseudo-algebraic argument being applied to sentences such as "I couldn't find none nowhere", where logic dictates that three negatives make a negative. One word



■ This diamond is known as The Unique Pink, the largest fancy vivid pink pear-shaped diamond ever offered at an auction. Peter Trudgill asks if we are always correct in how we use the word 'unique'.

Picture:
LAURENT
GILLIERON/AP

which suffers a lot from quasi-logical argumentation is unique, which only came into English from French in the mid-1800s. Many people at the time objected to it as being "unnecessary".

People who believe that words always ought to mean what they used to mean think that unique signifies "the only one of its kind".

Well, it does mean that. It came originally from Latin unicus 'single', which went back to Latin unus 'one'.

But it does not mean only that. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, unique also means 'having no equal, unparalleled, unrivalled, uncommon, unusual, remarkable'.

Pedants argue that it is wrong to say "almost unique" because something is either unique or it isn't; either there is one, or there is more than one. But a more reflective view would be that if there is one of something, then it is certainly unique; and if there are only two of that thing, it is of course not unique in that sense, but it is almost unique, in a way that would not be true if there were a hundred of them.

Pedants also argue that something cannot be "very unique".

But of course it can: if unique means unusual, as the OED says it does, then something can indeed be extremely unique.