

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Law tells criminals they cannot violate an Englishman's castle

For too long in our country, the perception that the law is not on the side of the victim – even that it panders to the rights of criminals – has persisted.

There have been many cases that polarised opinion on this issue, none more so than that of Norfolk farmer Tony Martin, sent to prison after shooting two burglars who broke into his home and killing one of them.

Yesterday the justice secretary, Chris Grayling, signalled that from now on, the law would firmly be on the side of people defending their homes, with charges only being made against a householder if their actions were “grossly disproportionate”.

Some have suggested the move encourages vigilantism, but we believe there is a clear line between taking the law into one's own hands and an innocent person defending their life and those of their families in their own home.

As it is, the top judge in the land is of the mind that there are already protections in place. Indeed, recent cases, such as that of Vincent Cooke or Andy Ferrie, appear to show the law already starting to come down on the side of homeowners.

That is a credit to the government. Even if Mr Grayling's new change does little more than send out a message to the law-abiding that they have a clear and protected right to defend their homes reasonably then it will be worth it.

If it sends out a message to criminals that they cannot use the protection of the courts once they commit a criminal act, then all the better.

An Englishman's home is his castle, his family is his joy. When these things are directly threatened by the criminal acts of others, he should be permitted to defend all the things that make his life worth living.

Nick agrees with us

It's not easy being Nick Clegg. The undisputed winner when it came to the pre-general election televised debates, his decision to form a coalition government with the Conservatives means getting his party into power has come at a considerable price in the eyes of many in his own party, let alone the voters.

The days of the rose garden are but a distant memory and his interview with the EDP today gives an inkling of the frustrations of working in a coalition.

His party has been foiled in its attempts to reform the House of Lords and chancellor George Osborne seems to have dismissed his plans for a so-called mansion tax.

Mr Clegg was in Norfolk yesterday to pay a visit to the Liberal Democrat faithful and he knows full well what a fight his party is going to have on its hands come the next election.

Good on him, though, for taking time out from rallying the troops to not only speak to the EDP, but to lend his support to our Ambulance Watch and Normandy Veterans campaigns.

Trees' deep-rooted value

It would be hard to imagine a countryside without trees. And you only need to think back to the intense public outcry over the government's short-lived forestry sell-off plan to realise their importance to the nation.

But here in East Anglia, the prevailing landscape is one dominated by agriculture, with fewer areas of woods than in other parts of the county, according to the Woodland Trust. So any planting initiatives should be applauded – but not just for the trees' natural beauty and their vital role as the living lungs of the country. They can also bring value to that same farming scene, helping to shelter livestock, keeping nutrients in the soil and preventing contaminants from finding their way into streams and rivers.

WORDS FOR LIFE

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock.

Revelations 3:20



READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY



ROSEMARY HOWARD

WHAT'S GOING ON OVER THERE? An inquisitive group in Fakenham. Picture by Rosemary Howard If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Pronunciation problems keep getting worse

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An article I wrote recently mentioning the mispronunciation of local place-names seems to have struck a chord. I suggested it was one thing to have BBC Radio Norfolk presenters who didn't have local accents, but another thing altogether if they didn't know, and didn't bother to find out, what local streets, suburbs and villages were really called.

The problem has worsened as more and more refugees from the Home Counties have moved into Norfolk. They can't be blamed for not knowing how to say things, of course, but it would be nice if they would listen to us and find out – or just ask. Take Heigham.

Heigham used to be a village just west of the Norwich city wall. The heart of the parish lay on the site of an ancient Anglo-Saxon settlement on the south bank of the Wensum, north of the Dereham Road, but it eventually stretched as far south as The Avenues and Newmarket Street. It's here that we find Heigham Street, Heigham Watering, Heigham Road, Heigham Grove, Heigham Park and Heigham Park School. And we also have our very own Baroness Hollis of Heigham.

Everyone in Norwich knows Heigham is pronounced “Hay-um”. Or at least everyone used to. But some people don't seem to have acquired this knowledge, even though you would think the spelling might at least



DELIGHTFUL GREEN SPACE: Heigham Park.

suggest the possibility – consider “weigh, eight, sleigh, freight, neigh, neighbour, inveigh”. Some incomers have even acquired jobs as broadcasters on local radio without taking the elementary precaution of informing themselves about how to pronounce local names. They call Heigham “High-um”.

Some suggest this might actually be the right way of saying it, because the name is derived from “high-ham”. But it isn't. As you will know if you've ever cycled up Grapes Hill, there's nothing high about Heigham. It's one of the lowest parts of the City, which was why it was so badly affected in the 1912 floods. The name actually comes

from Anglo-Saxon “hecc-ham” where “ham” was the word for home, homestead, village, and “hecc” was a sluice.

We should be protective about our local names because if we don't, nobody else will.

As far as broadcasters are concerned, let's just say to them: we don't actually expect you to say “Ham” – it probably wouldn't sound right anyway, unless you've got a local accent. But there's nothing difficult about saying “Hay-um”, is there?

■ Peter Trudgill is president of Friends of Norfolk Dialect

■ What do you think? Email: EDPletters@archant.co.uk