

# Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1870

## RAF Marham news means that Norfolk can continue to reach for the skies

If little Jacob Jenkins wants to follow his father into the RAF, he might just get his chance now.

For Jacob's dad, Sgt Andy Jenkins, who arrived home from a deployment in Afghanistan just in time to see his son born, was one of the thousands of personnel who yesterday learned that the air force is set to stay in Norfolk for at least another generation, bringing the world's most advanced warplane to Marham.

That means work for technicians like Sgt Jenkins until 2040.

There were fears that thousands of skilled, well-paid jobs which bring in more than £100m to our economy might take off too, when the last Tornado aircraft flies into the sunset in five or six years' time.

The Make It Marham campaign, launched two years ago by the EDP and other local media, politicians and community groups, secured the base's future for the remaining life of the RAF's Tornado fleet.

But there were question marks over what would happen to Marham once the ageing jets, which have seen such distinguished service over the last three decades, were retired. Those question marks remained until yesterday morning, when defence secretary Philip Hammond flew to Norfolk to break the news in person to RAF personnel. Mr Hammond paid glowing tribute to the Norfolk base, in front of a hangar packed full of airmen and women of all ranks, from veterans of the Gulf and Libyan conflicts to new recruits.

Many of their number will form part of the new combined RAF and Royal Navy squadrons which will operate the Lightning both from Marham and from future aircraft carriers. Many, many more people living on and around the base had their own and their family's futures secured for the foreseeable yesterday. From ground crews to civilian defence contractors, some 5,000 families depend directly on RAF Marham to put bread on

the table. An almost incalculable number more depend on it indirectly, from the pub trade to primary school teachers, from village shops to rural businesses of all shapes and sizes. As the news sank in yesterday, there was also relief that RAF Lossiemouth's future had been secured as a base for the Typhoon fighter jet. Recently, the waters have been clouded by claims the Lightning would be based in Scotland. While at times the outcome was painted as a case of one base being chosen over the other, defence chiefs clearly view both stations as vital to our future needs.

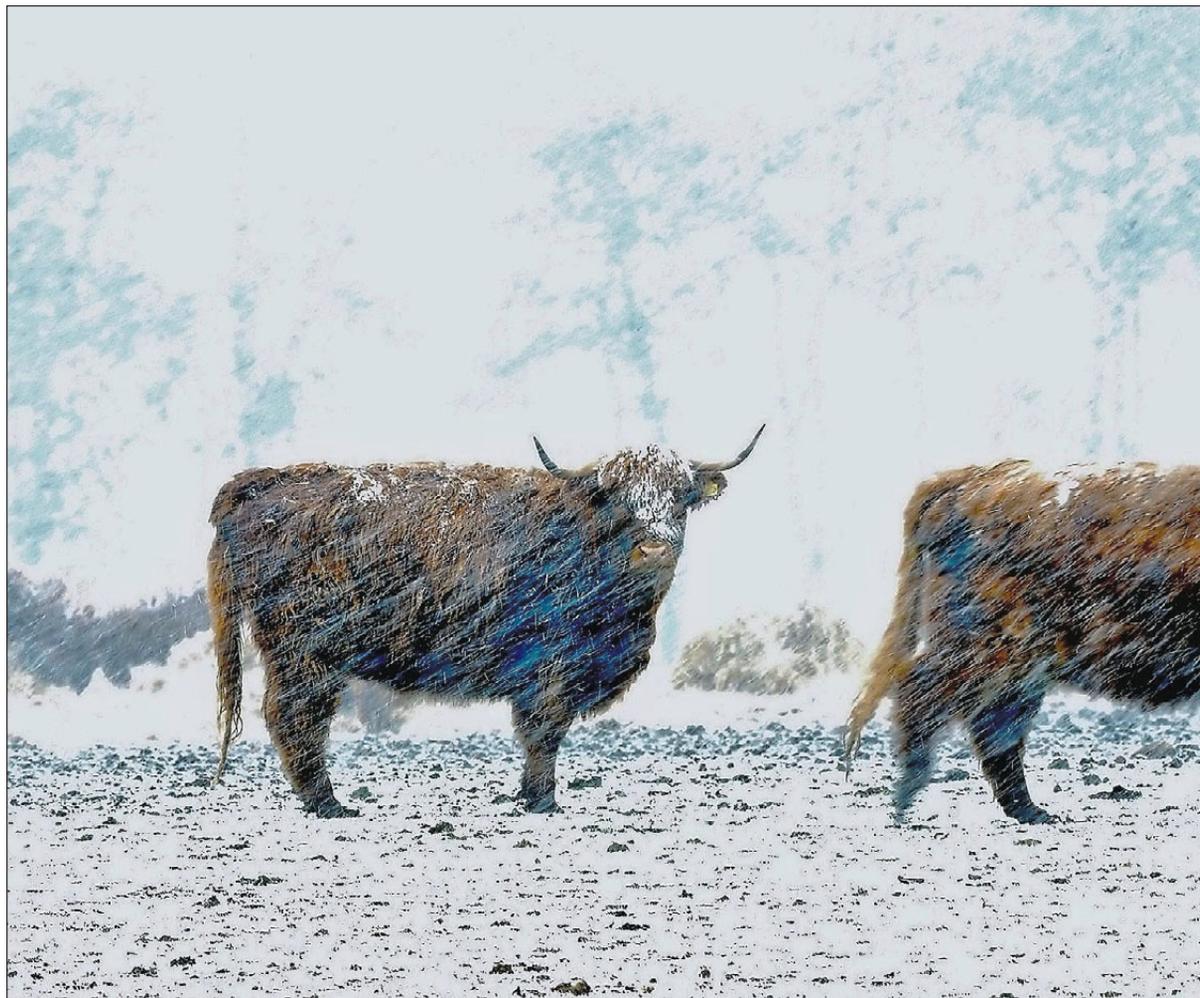
Mr Hammond said there would be changes ahead as Marham updates its infrastructure in readiness for the Lightning's arrival. The aircraft is capable of short take-off and landing – not unlike the iconic, recently-mothballed Harrier jump jet.

New runways, new buildings and improvements which have been put on hold until the base's future was decided will bring badly-needed work for our region's businesses. Beyond the faceless military-speak of basing and budgets, capabilities and capacities, there will be countless people in Norfolk who can begin planning for their future and have a little less to worry about amid the usual diet of economic doom and gloom today. For as long as those sleek fast jets thunder through our skies on training flights, just about everyone who lives here benefits in one way or another from their presence. We've waited a long time for yesterday's announcement. Thank goodness it was the right one for Norfolk. Thank goodness they made it Marham – and gave another generation the chance to reach for the skies.



### READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



MICHAEL SILLETT

**KEEPING A WEATHER EYE:** These highland cattle look quite at home in the wintry conditions at Easton. If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## Our vowel habits set us apart from the rest

PETER TRUDGILL

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You can tell that some of the sub editors at the EDP don't have local accents.

It's easy to see that from the punning headlines they come up with.

The newspaper recently ran a nice series of articles on the long, hard winter of 1962-3, with photographs that brought back memories to me of walking to school because buses couldn't get up Kett's Hill.

One of the pieces had the headline "White-out was snow joke".

For most people that's quite amusing, I suppose – but if you have a Norfolk accent, it doesn't work. It's not a pun. 'Was no joke' and 'was snow joke' don't sound at all the same, the way I say them. 'No' and 'snow' don't rhyme.

For people with real Norfolk accents, there are lots of pairs of words which are not the same even though people elsewhere say them identically. We 'do different'. We have two different 'long o' sounds. Take pairs like: moan-mown, nose-knows, road-rowed, sole-soul, flo-flow, doe-dough, so-sew, toe-tow. For us, they're different. That's because, originally, all English speakers pronounced them differently. And that's why they're spelt differently – one set with 'ow' or 'ou', the other set with 'oa' or 'oe' – modern English spelling represents mediaeval English pronunciation. That headline would not have been a pun for Shakespeare either.

During the last 400 years, in most of the



**NO NUANCE:** Puns about snow in headlines fell on deaf ears among Norfolk dialect speakers for whom snow and no are pronounced very differently.

English-speaking world the distinction between those two vowel sounds has been lost.

Not by us, though. We proudly maintain a difference which goes way back, into the ancient history of our language.

In my accent, and yours too if you speak like me, we have preserved a difference between two vowels that dates from the very beginning of the English language, 1,500 years ago. I'm quite pleased about that. Sadly, nowadays this doesn't necessarily apply to all of the younger people in Norfolk. Maybe – after you and me and Shakespeare managing to preserve this venerable distinction for many

hundreds of years – we are going to be members of one of the last generations to keep it alive.

In the meantime, puns like the Beatles' Rubber Soul, and respellings like Baby Gro and donut, don't work for me – it took me a very long time, as a child, to work out what IOU meant. And there's a clothing repair and alteration shop in the city – obviously run by people without local accents – called "Sew Fast". Shakespeare wouldn't have got that either.

■ Peter Trudgill is president of Friends of Norfolk Dialect.  
■ What do you think? Email: [EDPletters@archant.co.uk](mailto:EDPletters@archant.co.uk)

### WORDS FOR LIFE

Promote the kind of living that reflects wholesome teaching.  
Titus 2:1

