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Encouraging signs in the battle to overcome dementia

The scourge of dementia is one that is felt, in one way or another, in every community and, in all probabilities, in just about every family.

And this sad situation is only going to get worse. Every three minutes, someone in the UK develops dementia, and one in three of all the babies born last year will develop the condition in the course of their lifetime.

One of our society's greatest challenges is, without doubt, how to cope with the consequences of this dreadful, devastating condition and – ultimately – how to defeat it.

Just as the tackling of cancer rates has become a “fight” for all to become involved in – through government spending, charity fundraising, public health messages and personal awareness of what preventative steps can be taken – so must the battle with dementia.

There are encouraging signs that this is increasingly happening. People, politicians, businesses and public health experts are mobilising. Society is becoming galvanised.

Events like Dementia Awareness Week, which starts today, doubtless help.

It provides an opportunity to consider the impact not just on those who have the condition, but their loved ones too. Throughout the week, this newspaper will also be exploring how businesses and public bodies are responding to the challenges that dementia raises, and highlighting areas of research which are starting to make significant advances.

But, of course, our work will not finish at the end of Dementia Awareness Week. Rather, we will focus on this pitiless condition until the battle is won.

Vital to cast your vote

We rather suspect that the biggest European-themed discussions in most homes over the weekend related to the Eurovision Song Contest rather than the forthcoming referendum.

Yet the findings today of our new poll on the subject – the referendum, that is, not Eurovision – should send a jolt through the region every bit as attention-grabbing as the outfits worn on the Stockholm stage. It shows the “leave” campaign enjoying a whopping nine point lead over “remain” among East Anglians.

The split may not mirror the national picture, but it does chime with previous studies suggesting our region is a stronghold of Brexiteers – although those earlier polls did indicate a healthy lead for “leave” in Norwich.

There are two obvious, but vital, points to make: firstly, the matter will not be decided in our region alone, which is precisely why we need to make sure our voice – or voices – are heard in the national debate.

Secondly, as last year's general election showed only too clearly, we shouldn't rely too heavily on what polls appear to be telling us. And this is exactly why people need to get involved in this debate and make certain they vote. Do not assume the matter is settled.

East Anglian tradition

The exact origins of dwile flonking seem to be as unfathomable as the rules and terminology.

Whether it is a centuries-old East Anglian tradition revived by folk enthusiasts, a cunning prank by a group of young men in the 1960s, or the product of the fertile imagination of Michael Bentine, a founding member of the Goons, depends on who you ask.

But 50 years on from that first documented contest, between workers from two rival Suffolk print firms, we can at least start to draw some conclusions.

It is safe to say that if dwile flonking was not an East Anglian tradition before, it certainly is now.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A postcard from Cromer is the title given to this sunny photograph taken at Cromer by Alan Hatton. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

What's in a name? A lot more than you might think

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It's no surprise that the names of English counties have their origins in the English language. Norfolk was originally two English words: North Folk. Suffolk was South Folk. Essex was East Saxons.

Very few names of American states, on the other hand, are English in origin, in spite of the USA being a predominantly English-speaking country.

It's true that Washington was named after George Washington, whose surname derives from the English place name – there's a Washington in Durham and another in Sussex. New Hampshire and Maryland are also basically English-language names.

New York looks English, though it's worth noting that York derives from Old Norse Jorvik, which in turn comes from the Latin name Eboracum, which itself derives from an earlier Celtic name. And the Jersey in New Jersey is from the French name for our Channel Island, which itself comes from the Old Norse of the Norman Vikings: the -ey meant “island”.

But the other American state names are mostly not English. Vermont is 17th century French for “green mountain”. Colorado, Nevada and Florida are all



■ Canterbury cathedral in Kent, one of our oldest county names. Picture: PA/GARETH FULLER

Spanish past-participles; they mean respectively “coloured” ie red, “snowed” ie snow-covered, and “flowered” ie flowery. Montana “mountain” and California are also Spanish.

Rhode Island was probably originally Dutch, denoting “red island”.

But more than half of the state names are derived from indigenous Native American languages which is, after all, only right and proper since those languages were spoken in America first, tens of thousands of years before any European language.

Connecticut is Mohican for “long river”. Kentucky is an Iroquois name, probably meaning “prairie”. Michigan is from Ojibwe. Alabama was originally a Choctaw name; so was Oklahoma. Missouri comes from the Miami-Illinois language, as does

Illinois. And North and South Dakota are from Sioux.

This raises the interesting question of why are there no pre-English county names in England. After all, we know that the English language only arrived in this country about 1,500 years ago, while the Brythonic Celtic language – the ancestor of Welsh – was spoken here well before the Anglo-Saxons arrived, maybe as much as 4,000 years earlier.

Well, actually, there are at least two pre-English examples. Kent is derived from the name of the Celtic tribe the Cantiaci, whose name also appears in Canterbury. And Devon is derived from Dumnonia, the name of the Celtic kingdom of the Dumnonii people, which covered what is now Cornwall, Devon and part of western Somerset.