

# Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY  
SINCE 1870

## A weekend when our communities were happy and glorious

There are few things as archetypally British as a street party, with flag waving, sponge cakes and sausage rolls.

The stereotype is not really complete, though, without the stiff upper lip that is the result of a brisk downpour or three.

That recipe was served up in style throughout the weekend, both locally and nationally, as our communities came together to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday.

Thankfully, the rain was far from a fixture, with plenty of dry, warm weather to help the parties take off.

Weather is only ever the icing on the cake, though. For there is no party without people.

One enduring impression from a weekend of celebration is how much affection we have for our monarch.

The Queen is loved and admired, both as our head of state and for her unstinting service to country and Commonwealth. Countless people did not hesitate to show that with their displays of red, white and blue.

The other impression is that reports of the death of community spirit are exaggerated. The latest list of recipients of the Queen's Birthday Honours showed that there are exceptional individuals who sacrifice self for serving their communities.

The weekend's celebrations magnified that, with many more people working tirelessly to organise colourful gatherings, shows and special events.

And their efforts were richly rewarded by the individuals, couples, families and friends who joined the parties.

On a weekend when some Englishmen abroad besmirched patriotism, the celebrations showed its true face.

## Let there be dark!

When we eulogise about Norfolk, we are largely talking about its daylight delights. After all, there are so many of our treasures that look better in the light.

Typically, though, there is always another side to Nelson's County. For while darkness often brings doom and gloom, here it ushers in another treat – some of the most unspoilt night skies in Britain.

Plenty of people already know about Norfolk's dark secret (if it can be a secret when it is known about). At Kelling Heath Holiday Park there are star parties that attract visitors from all over Britain.

But light pollution is a growing problem, even in our blackest spots. It is also the scourge of stargazers, who need darker darkness than most of us would feel comfortable in.

Sadly, many younger people who are growing up in towns and cities are unable to survey the skies and dream of distant galaxies. They are missing out on a treat and an important aspect of their education.

This research about our night skies highlights the blackspots – but it is also a reminder that light pollution is threatening to overwhelm them.

## Make tour a carnival

We have been lucky enough to host the Men's Tour of Britain. This week, we are equally fortunate to be the launch point for the Aviva Women's Tour.

Some of the world's most exceptional cyclists will be here, tackling the stage from Southwold to Norwich.

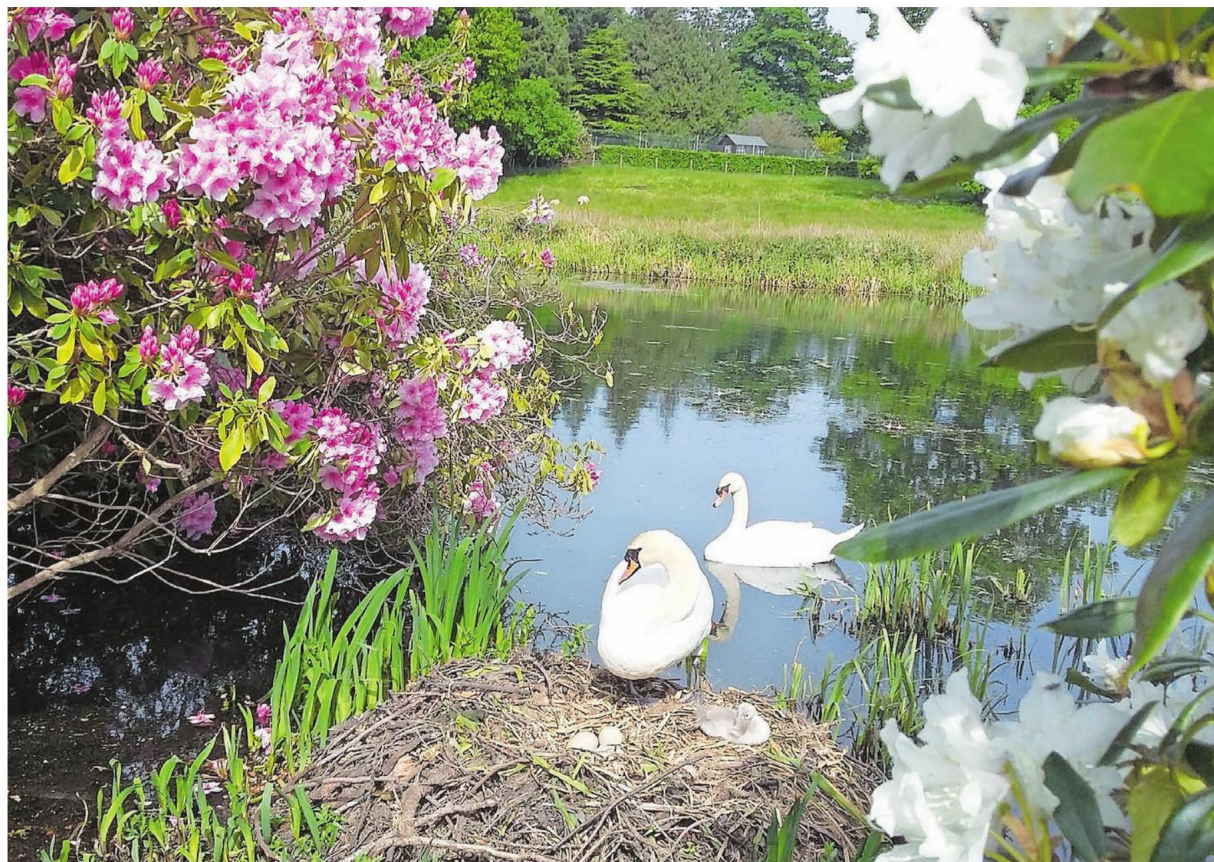
But will we be joining them?

For something so prestigious, which is a fantastic spectacle, we must put on a show. It would be a crying shame and something of an embarrassment if the riders saw sparse crowds and limited interest.

So let's get out the flags and line the route, cheering these extraordinary athletes at the gruelling start of an epic event.

## READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

**iwitness24**



■ This lovely image of swans nesting on the lake at Hoveton Hall was taken by Lindsay Byford. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## Does being nice aggravate you? Well it upsets some

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There are some pedants who reckon that it's wrong to use the word aggravate to mean 'irritate' or 'annoy' – as in "stop doing that, it's very aggravating!". This is probably the most common usage of the word in modern English. But the pedants say that it's incorrect because aggravate comes originally from Latin *aggravare*, which meant 'to make heavier', derived from the adjective *gravis* 'heavy'.

Aggravate was originally borrowed into English with the meaning of 'to make more serious' – our first record is from 1530 – and we do still use it like that: "that will only aggravate the situation". But it very quickly gained the additional meaning of 'annoy', first recorded in 1598.

The pedants' fallacious belief that the original meaning of a word is its "true" meaning is known as the etymological fallacy: some of these pedants fallaciously maintain that it is wrong to talk about "three alternatives" because alternative comes from the Latin word *alter*, which meant 'second'.

When I was at school we had a teacher who greatly disliked the way we used the word nice. He used to reprimand us, intoning "nice means precise". It is true of course that we can talk about "a nice



■ When you're trying to be nice it doesn't help to remember the original use of the word.

distinction". But that is not how most English-speaking people use it.

In fact, the history of the word nice provides a very good illustration of how wrong the etymological fallacy is. Nice originally comes from two ancient Indo-European roots: *skei* meaning 'cut', which came down into Latin as the verb *scire* 'to know', probably via a meaning like 'be able to distinguish one thing from another'; and *ne* meaning 'not'. The combination of the two forms produced the Latin verb *ne-scire*, which meant 'to be ignorant of'. This led to the development of the adjective *nescius* 'ignorant', which appeared in Old French as the word

nice, which meant 'silly'.

Nice was then borrowed from French into medieval English, with the meaning 'foolish, shy'. Over the centuries it gradually changed its meaning, first from 'shy' to 'modest', and then 'delicate' (with the 'precise' meaning coming from this). Then, when applied to people, the 'delicate' meaning gradually became 'considerate', followed by 'pleasant', and finally 'agreeable'.

In 6,000 years, the meaning of nice has changed enormously. Surely no one in their right mind would want to argue that the "real" meaning of nice is, or ought to be, 'not cutting'?