

# OPINION & COMMENT

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### Plenty of stirrings in Conservative ranks

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A prime minister may cast aside attacks from the Opposition benches of the Commons with a show of strength and a flash of wit; but when the assault is from his own party, it is a different kettle of fish. In the next few weeks David Cameron will face several assaults from within his own ranks which will help clarify his chances of winning the next general election.

Managing the politics of coalition with the Liberal Democrats, with whom relations have crashed over constitutional reform, must be sapping, even if Mr Cameron does get on well personally with their leader Nick Clegg – and there is a danger of it becoming a growing distraction from getting across the real policies and messages he wants people to listen to.

Former minister Tim Yeo hardly held back yesterday when he challenged Mr Cameron to be “man or mouse” and spoke of a “dignified slide towards insignificance” with voters unable to see his priorities and passions.

The context was a third Heathrow runway. The code was blatantly obvious.

Mr Cameron's dinner with parliamentary colleagues next week and William Hague's appearance at the 1922 committee of Tory backbenchers are unlikely to be very comfortable. Rail fares, planning, Sunday trading laws, not to mention runways... Or even the coalition... Or Europe... Or the economy. There are plenty of stirrings in Conservative ranks.

Party conference season approaches and officials will have to work hard to keep the lid on things – or Boris Johnson. Then, for good measure, there is a raft of foreign problems, not to mention a trial (Chris Huhne), a by-election (Corby) and an Autumn Statement (further economic doldrums?) to come.

Mr Yeo mentioned Harold Macmillan. He might have mentioned the former Tory premier's words – “Events, dear boy, Events” to describe the fragility of carefully laid plans. For Mr Cameron there is plenty at stake.

### Sporting success

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The Olympic Games were a huge success. Even the cynics, many of whom predicted the games would be a disaster, must have been swept along by the feel-good fervour which accompanied Team GB's success.

But for those who have felt starved of sport since the closing ceremony, there's now the chance to see more athletes testing themselves against the world's best. Today sees the opening ceremony of the Paralympic Games, which means another week and a half of exciting competition.

It's good to see that there is so much interest in these games, with many of the events likely to be sold out. So get ready to immerse yourself in sports you didn't see in the Olympics, such as goalball, boccia, sitting volleyball and wheelchair fencing, as well as in many you did, such as swimming, judo, cycling and athletics. The competitors may be disabled, but they are elite athletes, so it promises to be another superb sporting spectacle.

### Cold war still chills

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Hidden beneath an old people's home on the outskirts of King's Lynn, a former civil defence bunker provides a fascinating insight into some of the secret preparations made during the Cold War era of the 1960s and 1970s, when many were convinced a nuclear conflict with the Soviet Union was more a case of when than if.

Charts on its walls have spaces to pencil in radiation levels and casualties across Norfolk and Cambridgeshire after the initial strikes – provided those hidden inside the shelter were protected by its reinforced concrete and steel blast doors.

If they survived the attack, who knows what they would have found waiting for them when they ventured out through the airlock for the first time? We live in very different times today. Thank goodness.

#### WORDS FOR LIFE

‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.’  
2 Corinthians 12:9



#### READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY



COLIN INGLIS

NATURAL FORCES: Waves roll in at Sea Palling just before a storm hit. If you would like to submit a picture for this feature, visit [www.iwitness24.co.uk](http://www.iwitness24.co.uk)

## Norfolk has its own grammar – yes it do...

The word “grammar” has scary associations for many people. But there's really nothing to feel frightened about. We all use grammar all the time. You can't speak without it. With no grammar, a language wouldn't be a language. Think of the important difference between “Norwich beat Ipswich” and “Ipswich beat Norwich” – that's grammar.

So all languages and dialects have grammar, and the Norfolk dialect is no exception. We may “do different”, but we're not that different.

Most of the grammatical rules of the Norfolk dialect are the same as other English dialects.

All types of English agree that adjectives come before nouns – unlike in French. There's a grammatical rule of English which allows “the red house” but not “the house red”. Everyone knows that, even if they've never thought about it. That's grammar, too. It's not very scary, is it?

But English grammar does vary from place to place. Scottish has “my car needs washed”. American has “I've gotten used to it”. In England we don't say these things. But grammar may differ here too.

In Norfolk we can say “he drive very fast, she like that a lot”, without the -s that many other dialects use. That's one of the ways in which our grammar differs from Standard English.

Standard English is the dialect which is used in books and newspapers, and in the education system, so this sort of difference has led some people to think that Norfolk grammar is “bad grammar”. But there is nothing bad about it. It's just different.

PETER TRUDGILL



Local dialects may have lower status than Standard English, but that doesn't make them “wrong”. They just have their own, different grammar, with their own rules.

Think about the verb “to do”. Standard English often uses past-tense “did” where Norfolk and most other local dialects would use done – “she done lots of work”. But Norfolk uses the form “did” too, according to a specific grammatical rule which Standard English doesn't have.

There are two different verbs “to do”. There's the full verb “do”, which refers to someone actually doing something: “I do my shopping on Mondays”.

And there's the auxiliary verb which is used for grammatical tasks, like making questions – “do you like it?” – and making negatives “I don't like it”. In Norfolk we treat these two verbs differently – we have a grammatical distinction Standard English doesn't have. Standard English speakers say “You did it, did you?”, while dialect speakers here say “You done it, did you?”

This doesn't make Norfolk better than Standard English – it's just different. Many Norfolk dialect speakers probably couldn't tell you what an auxiliary verb is. But they do actually know – because none of them would ever say “You done it, done you?”. That would go against the rules of Norfolk grammar – rules that all dialect speakers learn as small children and know intuitively.

Some features of Norfolk grammar are older forms which have been lost elsewhere. When we say “Come on!”, we're using grammar that goes back to the Old English of a thousand years ago.

But when Norfolk dialect speakers say “You'd better go to bed now, do you'll be tired tomorrow”, they're using an East Anglian innovation, where “do” has turned into a conjunction which means “otherwise”.

My grandparents used this construction, but it's never been part of my natural speech, and it's not heard so much these days. But it did make its way from Norfolk to the southern USA. In her 1948 novel *Seraph*, the Florida writer Zora Neal Hurston has an American saying “Git this spoon betwixt her teeth do she's liable to bite her tongue off”.

So maybe it will survive longer there than here. It would be a pity if this “do” was lost for ever.

If there are any Norfolk dialect features you are particularly fond of, keep you a-usen on'em, do they might disappear.

■ Peter Trudgill is president of Friends of Norfolk Dialect (FOND).