

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870Latest warnings on
winter pressures at
A&E don't bode well

Our story earlier this year which exposed how an inflatable tent was used as a makeshift ward because of ambulance queues at A&E at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital was startling.

By throwing light upon this dark denouement, we hoped to jolt people into action to ensure it never happened again.

Hope springs eternal, so we like to think that our emergency services will be better able to predict and deal with any pinch-points.

But the latest warnings about A&E departments being strained to breaking point this winter do not bode well.

Numbers attending A&E continue to rise. And many of those attendances are from people with conditions that could be treated at GP surgeries. That is partly down to poor decisions by individuals, but it is also aggravated by difficulty in getting a GP appointment.

Of course, winter usually brings a spike in attendances, which can be exacerbated by prolonged cold or a norovirus outbreak.

None of this is a secret to the government or to health bosses.

So how can we be in a position where the clever money is on another series of A&E crises?

There has been plenty of time to diagnose and treat the problem before it flares up.

Somehow, though, we appear to be in line for more trouble. And if it results in another series of ambulance queues or makeshift wards in a car park, there will be some searching questions to answer.

Sharp political instinct

Norwich South's former MP, Charles Clarke, lost his seat in the Labour defeat of 2010.

And now, as he moves a little way south-west from Norwich to a new home in Cambridge, the political heavyweight former home secretary has spoken of his love of Norwich and his career, and he also had words of advice for current Labour leader Ed Miliband.

If the Labour party is to be elected to government at the next general election, he says, it must put forward a positive programme for change. A collection of negatives will not be enough to secure a foot in the door of Number 10 for Mr Miliband.

It's a lesson which could be learned by political parties other than the Labour party.

Mr Clarke's political instincts are clearly as sharp as ever.

Precious links retained

Youngsters mingled with second world war veterans full of tales of their time at Seething as the airfield welcomed about 5,000 people to its charity air day.

The event coincided with the 70th anniversary of the 48th Bomb Group, stationed at the site during the second world war, and one 91-year-old veteran described yesterday's occasion as emotional and touching. Events like this, and others around the region, are vital in keeping the strong links between the US air force and Norfolk alive.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iWitness24



■ Ready, steady... go! A rabbit and a squirrel have fun in Anne Marks's back garden in Waxham. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iWitness24.co.uk

Ve fing is... vis language has gone frough some changes

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Right now is a very exciting time to be doing research on the English language. All languages change. If you heard Shakespeare, you'd find him hard to understand; and if we had recordings of Anglo-Saxon, you wouldn't understand it at all. The sounds of English have changed enormously over time.

But why is this? We don't really know. It's just an inherent characteristic of human languages that they change.

We don't fully understand how changes take place, either. So when we do have a chance to observe a change as it's happening, that's exciting. We can't observe how the change from Chaucer's "k-nicht" – his way of saying knight – to our "nite" happened. But we can now very happily study, while it happens, a fascinating new change involving the two 'th' sounds, as in thigh and thy. Older Norfolk people will have noticed that many younger people no longer have these sounds. They replace them with f and v: fing, bruvver. When sounds fall together like this, it's called a merger. This particular merger is known as "TH-fronting". It started in London around 1850 and had spread to Bristol by



■ Joe Brown: Clearly ahead of the linguistic game when he called his backing group 'The Bruvvers'...

1870. It was reported in Reading around 1950, Norwich in 1960, Hull 1970, and Glasgow 1980. There's a clear pattern of geographical spread. It hasn't arrived in Liverpool yet – but it probably will.

Some people aren't as excited about TH-fronting as I am. They complain about it. They're part of the venerable Complaint Tradition that is repeated in every generation: older people hear youngsters speaking differently, and object.

But there's nothing wrong with TH-fronting. Nothing terrible comes of it. True, it means that some words now sound the same that didn't before: 'thin' = 'fin'. But if you can think of a sentence where

that might cause misunderstanding, please let me know!

If you're part of the Complaint Tradition, you might consider that your own speech is also full of the results of earlier mergers inherited from your ancestors – unless, that is, you don't pronounce meet and meat the same. TH-fronting isn't lazy or careless or bad. It isn't good either. It just IS. I've been criticised for my "go with the flow" attitude to language change. But there's no other course to take. By all means complain if it makes you feel better. But bear in mind there's as yet no record of any sound-change ever being halted by a letter to The Times – or even the EDP.

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The Lord directs our steps, so
why try to understand everything
along the way?
Proverbs 20:24

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