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Benefits of EU must not mean we don't question status quo

On May 22 we will have a chance to decide who will represent us at what seems, for many, like a remote parliament in Brussels.

Set up in the aftermath of the Second World War, it is hard to fault the European Union's aim of creating lasting peace.

As we commemorate the First World War, we must remember that while we have fought wars on foreign shores, most of us who have lived all our lives in Britain have not experienced a war on our home front.

Our businesses benefit from the ability to trade in a single market, and the skills of the many who come from countries in the European Union are both wanted and needed – and our universities are working closely with scientists across Europe.

But that does not mean that we must not question the status quo.

The European Union has become a vast bureaucracy and there are downsides to the current terms and conditions of our membership.

The spectacular rise of the UK Independence Party in last year's local council elections – particularly in this region – is a demonstration of many people's concerns about whether this is being addressed.

While a vote on May 22 may be a statement of intent, we must also remember that we are not voting for MEPs who can bring about a change – it will largely be the negotiations of national governments that do that. We are voting for people who will represent us in a system of which we are a member of the club – whether we like it or not.

A sadly necessary step

The closure of small schools is an understandably emotive subject. Like the village pub or post office, they are seen as part of the fabric of rural life that keeps a community alive. This should not be dismissed out of hand.

However, when analysing something as important as the education of our children, other factors have to be considered as well.

Norfolk County Council's data about the average performance of children at our smallest schools is particularly striking: it is significantly below the Norfolk average, which is itself below the national average.

We can boast some fantastic small schools, but even here there are concerns about finance and sustainability.

It may be painful, but the council's approach has merit. But we must insist that each school's individual future is considered on its merits, and there is no blanket closure.

Infuriating Canaries

From the superb to the shambolic: Norwich City have this season mastered the art of inconsistency.

It is hard to believe that the sorry bunch on show on Saturday were largely the same who tamed Sunderland. The pressure is – unnecessarily – back on the Canaries. And, yet again, we face the prospect of a nerve-wracking, must-win home match at the weekend.

With Fulham following that West Brom match, it is time for a rare outbreak of consistency to calm our nerves.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Anne Marks sent us this picture of two pheasants squaring up to each other at Waxham when suddenly a hare arrived and wanted to join in. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

The day I thought mum was talking a load of 'tosh'

Peter
Trudgill



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When I was about five years old, my mother told me we were going to go out, it was raining, and I should go and get my mackintosh. I returned, saying that I'd found my mack but I couldn't find my tosh. I can still remember her laughing.

But what had happened there was actually very revealing linguistically. The original full version of "mackintosh" was often used in those days, as well as the abbreviation "mack", and so I was familiar with both words. I had made the mistake, on the basis of my knowledge of "mack", of interpreting what my mother said as "mack and tosh". I owned a matching sou'wester, and I assumed that was my "tosh"...

The way we say "mackintosh" in Norfolk is identical with how we would say "mack and tosh", if there was such a thing: mack'n'tosh. (This wouldn't have happened in London, where people say mackIn'tosh.) My interpretation of what my mother said made good sense, and was actually very clever, if I may say so myself. It just happened to be completely wrong. This is an example of what linguists call



■ In a simple sentence about Norwich City supporters Dr Peter Trudgill explains some of the differences in the use of the same words, below. Picture: LIBRARY

"re-analysis". Children hear and learn what older people say, but they may analyse it in their heads in a different way. The new analysis will be perfectly consistent with the sounds that have been uttered, but the exact interpretation will be different.

This tendency to re-analyse what we hear, if there's more than one possible interpretation, can have permanent consequences for languages. "An apron" was "a napron" in older forms of English; and "an adder" was originally "a nadder", while "a nickname" was originally "an eke-name" (where "eke" meant "also").

Re-analysis can be responsible, too, for more far-reaching changes, such as the

modern English use of "going to" to indicate the future. If "I'm going [somewhere in order] to see John", then seeing John will happen at some later time, and so "I'm going to see John" can be reanalysed as expressing a future event. "Going to" can now therefore be ambiguous. If you say you are "going to win", does that mean that you are travelling somewhere in order to try your best to be victorious, or that you are unreasonably confident about your abilities?

You can see both of these different meanings of "going to" in the totally reasonable and frequently-used sentence "I'm going to Carrow Road where Norwich City are going to win".

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For the word of the Lord is right and true; he is faithful in all he does.

Psalm 33:4

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