

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

Euro elections will have a bearing on national government

The European Parliament will be a very different place to the last one.

A shift in the political landscape has not just been seen in Britain, but around Europe.

The European elections are the biggest exercise in multi-national democracy in the world.

In total 751 MEPs have been elected over the last few days.

And Britain is not the only nation that has seen a change in the political hue.

In other parts of Europe there has also been strong support for Eurosceptic parties.

In this region, with the majority of those who voted supporting the Conservatives or the UK Independence Party, it is clear that the people of the East have a strong desire for our relationship with Europe to change, or indeed be terminated.

Over the coming months it will be interesting to see how this manifests itself in the day to day running of the European parliament. And at a national level how politicians in Westminster respond.

The results of these elections will have a bearing on our national political scene.

If our relationship is to change with Europe, it will be the national government that will have a bearing on this.

And with the general election less than a year away the mainstream parties will be looking closely at these results as they decide how they are going to persuade people to vote for them.

Town will fight back

The destructive power of fire, and the speed at which it can cause havoc, has been fully felt in Fakenham.

Thankfully, nobody appears to have been hurt.

We pay tribute to the brave firefighters, without whose professionalism and skill there could have been a very different outcome.

As the blaze is dampened, the full extent of the damage will emerge.

The very best of a community is often shown in the face of disaster, and the people and church-goers in the north Norfolk market town were no exception yesterday.

But while the immediate danger of the blaze is over, it may take many months before life returns to normal for those directly affected.

The community will stand shoulder to shoulder – and the EDP will give its steadfast support.

Darren Cann do it

Darren Cann is a modest man. So it's left to us to sing his praises as a Norfolk man who has worked wonders on the world stage.

Running the line at a second World Cup finals tournament is a remarkable achievement.

We will be cheering him on as he flies the flag for Nelson's County in Brazil.

We wish him all the best as he makes split-second decisions that could make or break the teams vying for the cup. And, like him, we hope he misses out on another final – because England make it through.

READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ The serenity of a deserted beach on an evening in Mundesley was captured by Russell Sparkes. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Our place names should be given the respect they deserve

Peter
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Sprowston, just outside Norwich, was called Sprowestuna by its Old English-speaking settlers. The name meant "Spro's tun": Spro was a man's name, and tun – pronounced toon – meant an enclosure. Sproughton in Suffolk has the same origin – in the 1100s it was written Sproston – and so does Sproston in Cheshire.

Tun has given us our modern word town, as a result of sound changes which have occurred over the past millennium. The corresponding German word, Zaun, means fence; and the Dutch version, tuin, means garden.

That Anglo-Saxon man's name, Spro, tells linguistic scientists all we need to know to say, categorically, that the modern pronunciation of Sprowston ought to be with the vowel of 'low' – not of 'now'.

Everybody in Norwich used to know that. When I was a child in the 1940s and 1950s, I never heard anybody pronounce it any other way. Over the past five decades, however, there's been a tendency for some people to use a non-traditional pronunciation with the 'now' vowel. Large numbers of people have moved in from outside; they've guessed at the pronunciation from the spelling; and



■ St Mary & Margaret Church, in Sprowston.

they've guessed wrong. A thousand years ago, -ow- was the Anglo-Saxon way of representing a diphthong very like the modern vowel in low – it has come down into modern Norfolk English almost unchanged. In Old English, 'to grow' was growan, 'to flow' was flowan, and 'to row a boat' was rowan.

But words which in modern English have the 'now' vowel weren't spelt like that at all, because they were pronounced very differently. One of these words was, as just discussed, tun – modern town. Cow was spelt cu, pronounced koo; now was nu, pronounced noo. If that man's name had been Spru, then the correct pronunciation of Sprowston today would be with the 'now' vowel. But it wasn't.

And it isn't. The pronunciation of Sprowston with the 'now' sound is wrong. It's a mistake.

It's not a surprising mistake because, unlike Old English, modern English spelling is ambiguous. This isn't a problem with -ow- words generally, because we learn to say them before we can read. But with place names, it is problematical because they're not part of everyday vocabulary except for locals – so, with high in-migration, errors creep in because of spelling ambiguity.

But there's nothing ambiguous about older Norfolk people's desire to have the traditional, centuries-old pronunciations of places in our county respected. We'd like to have our place-names back, please.

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He has made everything beautiful
in its time. He has also set eternity
in the human heart.
Ecclesiastes 3:11

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