

Eastern Daily Press

SERVING THE COMMUNITY
SINCE 1870

We must make sure these extra years are lived to the full

You would not think it to listen to the gloom that sometimes accompanies the latest forecasts on the subject, but the fact that we are all living longer is one of the great achievements of our age.

Previous generations would struggle to comprehend the way that the average age has marched steadily northwards to the point where breezing past the age of 80, 90 – even 100 – is no longer the rarity it once was.

Indeed, so remarkable has been this trend in recent years that the Whitehall office responsible for ensuring centenarians receive a birthday card from the Queen has had to recruit extra staff.

So while much is made of the difficulties an ageing population presents, let us never lose sight of quite what a wonderful thing that is, and how lucky we are as a society to have to deal with such a problem.

With all of that said, it is beyond doubt that how we cope with such a prospect is perhaps the greatest challenge our society faces.

So our report today, therefore, underlining quite what it will mean for our region in the coming years is of vital importance in making sure we are ready to cope.

The message – and its implications – need to be grasped. Not just by the politicians but by voters too.

As a society, we need to understand exactly what all of this will mean and think about what shape our services might take in the future. It is an undeniable and tragic fact that advancing years are already an unhappy time for some. We need to ensure that everyone can enjoy our society's great bounty – longer lives.

Well-earned praise

There is no doubting James Austin, from the law firm Birketts, when he describes family-run businesses as the “true bastions of the British economy”.

Yet these concerns and their unique contributions are sometimes overlooked. So the efforts of Birketts and the Family Business United group in looking to identify the longest-running such firms are to be applauded. These are the firms with the deepest roots, the deepest connections with their communities. They are bound together not just by business but through bonds of kin.

Nevertheless, commerce has changed greatly since these long-running firms first set up shop, and many others have since vanished. Some of their inherent qualities can make them vulnerable. Yet those generations of accumulated knowledge should allow them to thrive for many years more.

Seeing the light in Lynn

Talk to a proud resident of King's Lynn about their home town and you will often detect a sense that they feel it is sometimes somewhat overlooked, perhaps even disparaged by outsiders. And there is perhaps something other than paranoia in this perception. Yet any adverse attitudes to Lynn that might exist in the minds of some are surely being blown away by the schemes coming out of this wonderful town of late. The most recent is its simply stunning light show, which rivals anything else seen anywhere else in the country. We love Lynn. Others will soon see the light too.

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Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'

Matthew 22:37-38

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READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ Fire spinning on Sheringham beach by Chris Taylor. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

O my... those Normans do have a lot to answer for

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There are things to be grateful to the Normans for – Norwich Cathedral, for a start.

But they did cause us problems when they first arrived in 1066, and they're still causing us problems.

Here's one example.

The normal way of representing the short u sound in English is with the letter u, as in cup, up, butter. But, mysteriously, there are some words where we don't use a u and spell them with an o instead: above, come, dove, honey, London, love, monk, some, son, wonder...

Why on earth do we do that? For children learning to read, and for foreigners, this is a problem.

How are you supposed to know that “on” is on but “son” is son?

To explain this strange state of affairs, we can look at the spelling used by our Anglo-Saxon forebears.

Their orthography was much more sensible. In Old English, above was “abufan”, come was “cuman”, dove “dufe”, honey “hunig”, London “Lunden”, love “luftu”, monk “munuc”, some “sum”, son “sunu”, and wonder “wundor”.

So why did the Normans start messing things up by abandoning this perfectly



■ Ovington, Uvington or Ovvington? Blame the Normans for the difficulty.

sensible Anglo-Saxon system, and starting to use a letter which normally stood for the o sound, as in “on”, to stand for the u sound, as in “son”?

The clue comes from noting that, in each of the words I've listed, the letter o comes before an m, v, or n.

The Norman scribes used a system of joined-up handwriting where, if you had too many u's and v's and m's and n's together, you couldn't tell where one letter stopped and another started.

If the kind people at the EDP will print “umununum” for me, you will be able to see the breaks between the letters.

But if you imagine how it would look in certain styles of handwriting, you can

work out what the problem would have been.

So by writing o instead of u, the scribes made texts easier to read, even if that made the spelling more difficult.

Because this “o” spelling is misleading, problems are occurring today with place-names, because non-local people come along and are, well, misled.

Ovington near Watton was, in Anglo-Saxon times, the settlement (-tun) of the people (-ing-) of a man called Ufa; the name used to be spelt Uvington, and was pronounced with the short u.

But these days, I'm told, there are people who call it “Ovvington”.

Blame the Normans.