

Eastern Daily Press

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SINCE 1870

Big hitters sway opinion but public will decide on EU

The starting gun has been fired for the beginning of months of debate and campaigning on whether the UK should remain in the European Union.

Prime minister David Cameron has returned from Brussels with his draft reform proposals and now hopes he will be able to use them to convince the public that we should remain a part of the union.

The completion of the negotiations was followed by the unveiling of a date for a referendum on June 23, and now influential characters in the worlds of business and politics are publicly affirming where their allegiances will lie in the forthcoming debate.

The coming weeks will no doubt see a parade of figureheads, celebrities and spokesmen and women all giving their verdicts on whether the United Kingdom should go it alone or remain in the EU.

And it is right that their arguments are discussed and scrutinised, so that the general public can come to their own conclusions.

Five cabinet members have already broken ranks with the PM and say they will back the case for leaving, while the London Mayor Boris Johnson also thinks the UK will be better off outside the EU.

While these well-known politicians may help to sway opinion, it is the votes cast by the general public which will decide the ultimate outcome of the referendum.

Many will already have made up their minds – and many are undecided.

But we should all ensure that when Thursday, June 23 arrives, we can make a well-informed choice when we cast our votes.

Duke deserves privacy

The Royal Family are constantly subjected to much public circus and scrutiny.

But East Anglians have rightly allowed Prince William to carry out his job in private – and have been praised for their restraint.

The Duke of Cambridge has been flying across this region's skies since joining the East Anglian Air Ambulance team last summer.

And, importantly, he has been allowed to do his job, carrying out life-saving work, in peace by the public and the regional press. The EDP pledged to respect his privacy and will continue to do so.

The Duke is an asset to this region, and hopefully he will continue to help its people for many years to come.

Since its inception 15 years ago, the East Anglian Air Ambulance has grown to be one of the best in Europe. All its workers, whatever their status, should be thanked for their fantastic efforts to serve the region.

Honey will bring hope

The story of Honey Goodwin's miraculously speedy recovery from her life-threatening illness is truly heart-warming.

Honey's family has been through some extremely difficult periods worrying about her health but now they can look forward to spending many happy times with her.

This young girl from Thetford will give hope and inspiration to the parents of many other children with serious illnesses.

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power.

Ephesians 6:10

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READER'S PICTURE OF THE DAY

iwitness24



■ A frosty morning under a blue sky captured at Thetford Forest by Neil Webb. If you would like to submit a picture for possible publication in the EDP, visit www.iwitness24.co.uk

Sometimes clues to the past are all in a name

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On the south coast of the Greek island of Crete, there is a village called Rodakino. Rodakino means 'peach'.

There is another village in Crete which is called Milia, 'apple tree'. And there are plenty of other Cretan villages which have names with meanings which are totally obvious to Greek speakers: Achladia 'pears', Kerasia 'cherries', Rodania 'pomegranate tree'.

Some 1500 years ago, English place-names were just as transparent as these Greek names, though they usually had very little to do with fruit or fruit trees.

Nowadays most of our place names no longer have very obvious meanings at all. Centuries of usage and linguistic change have obscured their origins.

The sounds have changed over the decades, and the original meanings have been weakened and then lost.

Who except an expert could tell that Mulbarton meant 'outlying dairy farm'? And even in the case of names which are



■ How many people know the place name Mulbarton means outlying dairy farm?

still somewhat transparent, we rarely stop to think about what they mean. It is obvious, if you consider it for a minute,

what Newmarket means. But do we normally think of the name as denoting 'a new market'? No, we don't. Newmarket to us means the Suffolk town which is the world centre of thoroughbred horse racing.

Anyway, there is nothing at all new about Newmarket nowadays. The first recorded instance of the name comes from about 1200 – it has not been new for 800 years! And then there is Newton, which is probably the most common place name in the whole of England.

This designation was obviously originally given to new communities when they were initially established.

The name Newton Flotman in Norfolk first appears in our records in 1291, and it is definitely not nearly as ancient as the name of, say, nearby Shotesham, first recorded in 1044 and likely to be very much older than that. (Flotman, by the way, was an old English word which meant 'sailor' or 'pirate', but was probably a family name in this case.)

In Norwich – which we no longer think of as being a 'northern settlement' – the place we call New Mills refers to water mills which have not been new since 1430, nearly 600 years ago.

The best sort of evidence we have for the way in which place names gradually lose their original meanings in this way comes from examples such as the – if you think about it – wonderfully strange Suffolk village name, Old Newton.