

Some names are just not meant to change

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We keep hearing these days about a place called “Thorpe St Andrew”. I wonder where it is. I grew up in a part of Norwich called “Thorpe”. Strictly speaking, it wasn’t part of Norwich, but we thought of it as if it was – we never said we were going to Norwich, we always just went “down the city”. And strictly speaking it wasn’t called Thorpe either. Our postal address was Thorpe-next-Norwich. But we always called it “Thorpe” – and we still do.

And there’s another mysterious place we keep hearing about called “Great Yarmouth”. Well, alright, yes, I am being disingenuous. I know perfectly well that’s the place Norfolk people call “Yarmouth”. But the “Great” is totally unnecessary. The town used to be called that because in the very old days there was also a Little Yarmouth, on the other side of the river. But it’s now part of Gorleston, and so saying “Yarmouth” isn’t even slightly confusing.

I was also a bit alarmed recently by a sign I saw in the city pointing the way to “Norwich Anglican Cathedral” – until I realised that this was simply the structure which has been known to Norwich people for over nine hundred years as “the Cathedral”. There’s also another new place called “St John’s Roman Catholic Cathedral”, but lots of Norwich people won’t know what you mean unless you say

“the Catholic Church”. On this same theme, some people have actually started saying “John Lewis”, but most of us, including the people who work there, still call it Bonds. And somebody somewhere decided to try and rechristen Jarrold’s as “Jarrold”, but this has made absolutely no headway at all – and the older and more beautiful part of the shop is still adorned with the real name.

Renaming the City Hall “City Hall”, without the “the”, does seem to have had some success, even though this is based on a misunderstanding of American English.

When Americans say “City Hall”, they don’t mean the building, they mean the politicians inside it.

But I’m afraid there’s absolutely no chance that “The Norwich and Peterborough Stand” will ever catch on at Carrow Road. Norwich City fans are naturally grateful for commercial sponsorship, but it seems unlikely that the boys in the Barclay will ever start chanting “Sing up the Norwich and Peterborough”. It’s the River End, isn’t it.

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