

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Bill Poortvliet

Chairman: Pat Cubitt

Vice Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS

July 2020

Nearly 40 years on our committee, 6 years as Chairman and President since 2015 yet it's difficult to keep a good man down. **Bill Poortvliet** is keen to steer our club through these parlous times and strengthen it for the future. As you are well aware **Chris Borrett** has tried to make the collection of samples for our upcoming *barley competition* easier by engaging your grain merchants but a few potential entrants appear to be slipping through the net. Bill has therefore resumed the role that his predecessor **Billy Hammond** filled in visiting farms to help collection and perhaps have a mardle at the same time. The grain merchants are still the main collection points but some of you should be getting a call from Bill or please ring him on 07770 571374.

Meanwhile we've been bowled another googly – if you'll excuse my mixing of metaphors and sports. **Chairman Pat** alerts me to the fact that Rossi's at North Walsham are now only offering 10 pin bowling so that our *annual match against Stalham for the Adams & Howling Cup* will be affected. Golf at Cromer and cricket on Aldborough Green are back but we hadn't expected this; something for **Stuart Ross** and others to ponder. Further to my last newsletter **Michael Pollitt** has confirmed that the Beck family have used an 'n' in the spelling of Brumstead rather than the 'm' since 1919. Apparently the previous sign was nicked so Alan Beck remade it featuring the harrow which was the name of the local pub until Neal Sands converted it into the HQ for his sprayer business, and he also uses an 'n'. Michael directs us to Stalham's website on which over 70 village signs are featured, most of them taken by the irrepressible Tim Papworth.

These do not include the twin villages of Saxthorpe and Corpusty but **Brian Last** has leant me a booklet on their heritage that was produced in the 1990s. This includes the attached list of local nicknames while my favourite was that of a well known Bodham resident. (Algernon) Hedley Thurtle (great name) was reputed to be Britain's oldest farmer when he died in 2007 at the great age of 102. He had the nickname 'Half Mangold' because it was alleged that he found that the weight of his load was fractionally over what he had contracted to sell which was sufficient for him to slice a mangold in half to get the weight right. Coincidentally another famous Bodham farmer died the following year, Pat's father Bill who, like generations of Cubitts, shared the Christian names William Partridge. Bill would have earned one or two nicknames over his long life not least while playing rugby for Holt at a grand old age. Another of that vintage was Henry Cordeaux who managed the Kelling Estate for the Deterdings and died last year; he was nicknamed Henry Cordite for his tendency to explode with rage. Janet Wilson who wrote this booklet was one of 15 children and observed that most of these nicknames stem from boys labelling each other and women were rarely given them. Some are inherited from grandfather's having skipped a generation. Interestingly Brian's son **Niven**, farmer of Church Farm in Saxthorpe, is called Jack by **Peter Perry-Warnes**, and I presume others.

Brian features in the aforementioned booklet as he joined his father Jack in running Corpusty Mill on New Year's Day in 1955. I have mentioned this place in previous newsletters as where the Fisher forebear Frank was in charge when the 1912 floods washed away the adjacent bridge; at Christmas he gave the children of the village a penny and an orange. Tragically Jack was killed in 1960 leaving his widow Hazel and Brian to run the business which, after the mill stopped operating in 1965, ceased trading in 1967. Brian was therefore Corpusty's last miller although he wasn't the last Last at t'mill. Brothers John and Roger established a gothic garden here and the latter was a producer of Monty Python sketches. He possibly had something to do with one of these about Village Idiots being filmed at Heydon with scenes at the churchyard (which I've referred to recently) and perhaps inspired by the story about Cromwell's Oak which stands close by.

Still in Saxthorpe there was an archaeological discovery 20 years ago when the Link Road was being built to take the B1149 traffic away from Corpusty Bridge. A retting complex was thought to have been found and this is given weight by the fact that a footbridge in the meadow downstream was called the Racketeer bridge. Retting and racketeer refer to the rotting of hemp which was grown extensively in the fourteenth century. Meanwhile about a mile upstream towards Briston is the Fulling Mill which was used in the woollen trade with power needed to beat Fuller's Earth into the wool. The better wool was used by the cottage industry around Aylsham and Worstead whereas the shorter wool had to be treated in this manner to produce fibres long enough to be worked into poorer quality textiles. South of the Bure Corpusty had two postmills, called Black and White, both of which had ceased operation by the end of the nineteenth century – one of them in a gale.

It is a shame that our trip to Austria didn't happen this year but we hope that this is a postponement rather than a cancellation. We encounter many interesting people and places on our annual travels and two of these have been in the news recently. On our trip to Herefordshire in 2010 we visited the A Green & Co. vegetable operation which has recently recorded 134 *covid19* cases amongst their staff. Like the strawberry operation we visited outside Ross on Wye and Plaices here in Norfolk these businesses are dependent on Eastern Europeans who were bused and flown in. There is nothing wrong with this as it is a long established practice and we Brits aren't generally prepared to do this work. However none of the press reports seem to give us the full picture. The other case is Olly Harrison who is the livewire NFU chap whose farm we visited last year on the Liverpool 'urban fringe'. He has grown sunflowers to highlight the contribution of the NHS and created a maze. Regrettably **Richard Harrison's** Wizard Maze at Metton is skipping a year on account of *covid19* but promises to be back next year.

Finally you may have read or heard about a new scheme being offered by DEFRA. This is a Resilience Audit available FREE to older farmers who are defined as being 55 and over. It involves a number of questions that takes about an hour to complete and a discussion about where future policy is moving. Anyone interested can contact me and I shall put you in touch with the local administering firm. A similar scheme may be introduced for tenant farmers later this year so again please get in touch if this is of interest.

Tim

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