

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Bill Poortvliet

Chairman: Pat Cubitt

Vice Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS

September 2020

“Holt farmer is Britain’s richest man.” No prizes for guessing whom I’m on about but there’s a grain of truth that has been highlighted in the press following the death of Logie Bruce-Lockhart at nearly 99. As a schoolboy at Gresham’s James Dyson dreamt of becoming a farmer – he now owns 35,000 acres - more than The Queen. His teacher parents lived in Holt and he worked on local farms in the holidays on potatoes, blackcurrants, Brussels sprouts and parsley. When his father died of cancer James was only nine but Logie pulled strings so that he and his brother could finish their education with the help of a scholarship. He didn’t have everything his own way as Logie refused to sign a sick note for him until he spelt ‘diarrhoea’ correctly. However Gresham’s were rewarded to a spectacular degree when Sir James made a £20 million donation to the school last year. We have seen for ourselves his Beeswax farms in Lincolnshire where he claims his agricultural operations are profitable. As an unapologetic Brexiteer he wants the UK to be more self sufficient and rejects re-wilding along with over complicated subsidy schemes but is not averse to chlorinated chicken.

It will come as no surprise that the Rule of Six has hit our winter season for six. Regrettably we shall be unable to muster for our AGM and our subsequent monthly meetings cannot happen until further notice. This will be the first time in our Club’s 72 year history that this has been necessary and our friends at Stalham are having to do the same. I have already bemoaned the decimation that *covid19* has caused coming as it did on the back of a disappointing winter season. Our February Bowls Match, even if permitted, would only comprise 10 pin bowling unless we could find an alternative venue to Rossi’s at North Walsham. However we should try to remain positive – **You Are Not Alone** on 0300 323 0400 hepline@yanahelp.org and **RABI** on 0808 281 9490 help@rabi.org.uk are always available for anyone who is struggling.

Chris Borrett, currently Stalham’s Chairman, has the samples for **Bob King** to judge – again thanks to **President Bill** for garnering these. Bill is a proud grandfather of **Jeff van Poortvliet**’s son Jack who kept Ben Youngs on the bench when starting a recent game for Leicester Tigers. Ben is stuck on 99 England caps so we hope he can prolong his career as he has just turned 31 while his brother Tom is only 33 and still club captain. It is a shame that Leicester are struggling – like their cricket team which has also fallen from grace (road) after the glory days of Illingworth and Gower although the success of their football team may compensate. Capturing the silverware for best 2019 sample in our inter club competition was Stalham’s George Gay of Mautby Farms pipping our **William Mack**; we await this year’s results to see if our 2020 champion can win back the title.

Some of you spotted the ‘deliberate’ error in my last newsletter when I referred to Gordon Wright as the unlucky lettuce grower. **Richard Youngs** clarifies that it was Gordon Bailey who ended things by “bizarrely driving his car at speed down the west end ramp near the Burlington Hotel in Sheringham and going over the edge onto The Promenade”. Another sad death to report is that of **John Perry-Warnes** at the age of 87. Most of us knew him as a long serving District Councillor who was always ready to help and for a long time he was amazingly supportive of his wife Marion when she contracted early-stage Alzheimer’s. After National Service John worked for animal feed companies and owned a smallholding at Baconsthorpe before devoting himself to his councillor duties for 26 years. I hope that the funeral exceptions to the Rule of Six mean that John can be given the send off that he deserved.

If we run into a curfew or, heaven forfend, another lockdown then forgive me for bringing forward my annual book recommendation for the lengthening autumn evenings. After his 2016 best seller *The Shepherd’s Tale*, the Lakeland farmer James Rebanks has just published *English Pastoral: An Inheritance*. He is the opposite of James Dyson in many ways as he has given up an arable tenancy to concentrate on his traditional farm that has been owned by his family for generations. He is bravely seeking to preserve his grandfather’s methods and get off the treadmill of flogging the natural resources of this sensitive landscape – he even sees the benefits that moles bring. Whatever your view of these two Jameses the northern uplands where I was brought up are good for the soul. Alf White (James Heriot) once came to my father’s farm (both Sunderland fans) and the remake of *All Creatures Great and Small* has initially attracted good reviews. There has been a plethora of other local vets on TV as well as the ubiquitous Yorkshire Shepherd at the top end of Swaledale where she breeds children (nine) plus a few tups, yows and their lambs. Otherwise try the charming documentary *Addicted to Sheep* (guilty) shot on a young family’s tenanted farm in neighbouring Upper Teesdale.

Tim

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