

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Bill Poortvliet

Chairman: Pat Cubitt

Vice Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS

Even Later November 2020

I am regularly indebted to **Michael Pollitt** and he has kindly provided me with his fulsome obituary of **Derek Pearce's** that appeared in Friday's EDP along with a fine photograph of the great man. I was therefore entitled to reproduce the piece but I apologise to **Chris Hill** and Archant for lifting some of their other material without asking. The report on **John Neill** is one such case but that was largely composed by the Neill family and the journalist chose a very strange title in referring to John as the "farmer who grew potatoes for Walkers crisps". When I checked the comments online one said he was accountable as "a destroyer of the environment with a legacy of poisoned rivers, depleted soils and climate change" while another simply posted "a life well lived". The sole comment on Derek Pearce to date is from his builder who calls him "a truly lovely man - kind, considerate, calm and a man of his word - a true gentleman". We live in polarized times and I fear that the next comment on Derek may, as like as not, troll his memory for no good reason. Be that as it may Michael has also provided:-

a snippet from a 2007 Holt Farmers' meeting

A recent increase in the price of milk was welcome news for the hard-pressed dairy sector, particularly if Tesco's decision to pay 85p producers 22p per litre ripples out across the industry. But Derek Pearce, who farms at Kerdiston, near Reepham, and is a former Master of the Worshipful Company of Farmers, has been doing some sums. His father, who had a dairy herd in his native Gloucestershire, got 5d per gallon for milk in the early 1930s. This was at a time of extreme hardship for the farming sector and when the milk price had crashed from 3/3d (16p per gallon) in 1921. So, 5d per gallon price in the 1930s equated to about 22p per litre today. Food for thought indeed, said Mr Pearce, who has been invited to address the Clan Trust's annual gathering.

One point Michael hasn't referred to is Derek's connection with Edward Jenner, the founder of vaccination, one of the greatest successes of modern medicine who was also a Gloucester man. With *COVID-19* running rampant and the current race for a vaccine there have been radio programmes and printed articles assessing whether there are lessons we can learn from the nineteenth century. Jenner noticed that the local milkmaids who regularly contracted the relatively innocuous cowpox didn't then contract smallpox. The testing wasn't so rigorous then as he simply extracted the cowpox pus from the milkmaids' hands and injected it into an eight year old boy - and it worked.

Finally I should give a shout out for Mr Pollitt. He has contributed so much to the Norfolk agricultural scene over several decades and continues to do so even after retiring from the EDP. He is regularly providing obituaries and other contributions while keeping Stalham ticking over and being heavily involved in charities like YANA, Thornage Hall and others. Michael almost died from pancreatitis and has written openly about struggling with depression in the past. I've suggested to him that he could write a book on Norfolk Agriculture or a whole host of other subjects but he says he is busy with his various projects and I'm unlikely to persuade a noble Yorkshireman otherwise.

Tim

P.S. Another blast from the past with a photo at our Ploughing Match in 1981. This is more recent than the last one I featured so I hope you have more luck in identifying the participants.

Hon. Secretary: Tim Nicholson 1a Market Place Holt Norfolk NR25 6BE Tel. 01263 711167
email: tim_nicholson@ymail.com

Hon. Treasurer: Tony Williams Red Roofs Ipswich Road Newton Flotman Norwich Norfolk NR15 1PN
Tel. 07818 017864 email: tony.williams@brandiston.co.uk