

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Bill Poortvliet

Chairman: Pat Cubitt

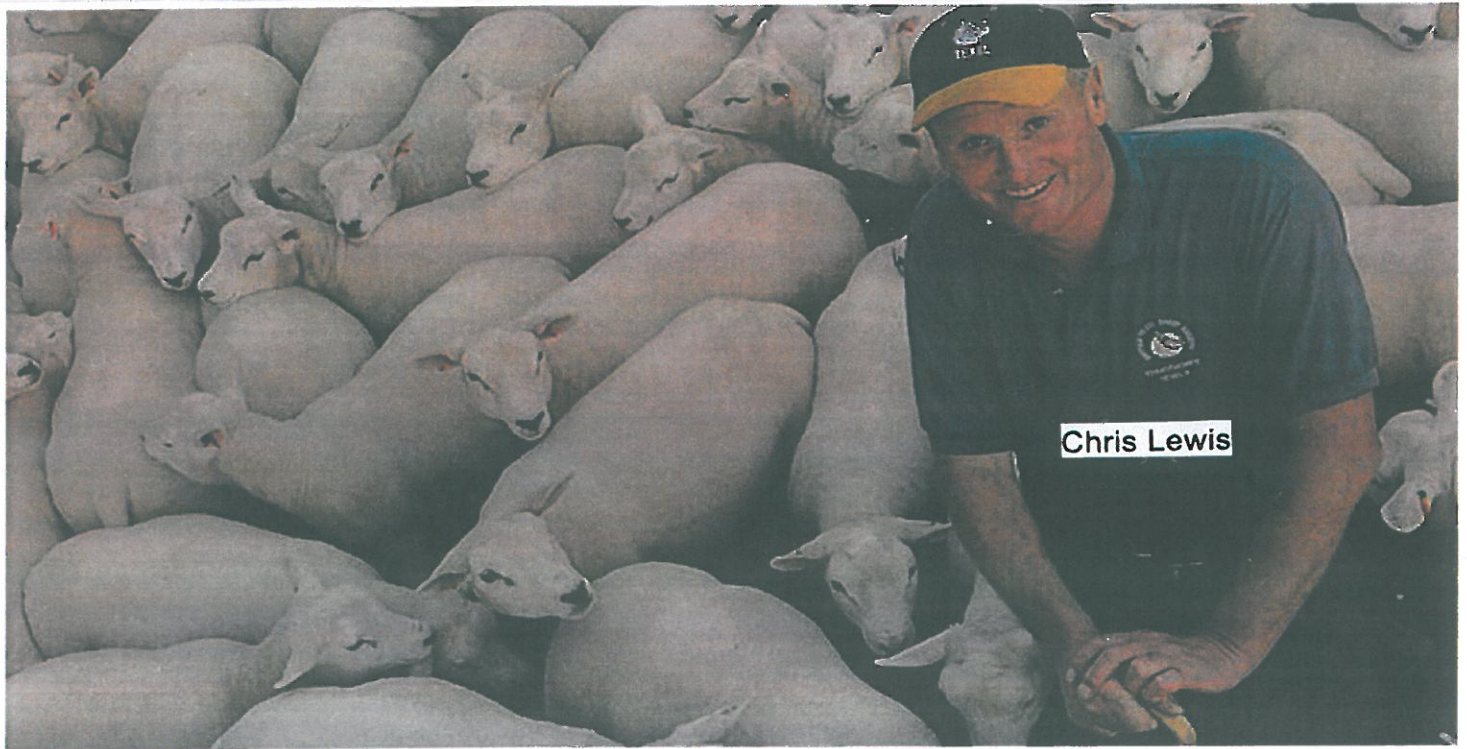
Vice Chairman: Andrew Ross

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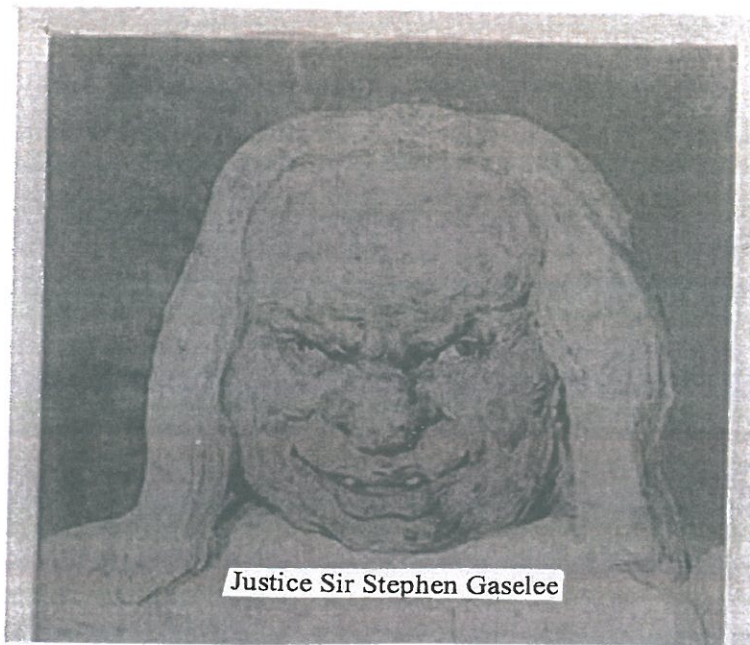
CLUB MATTERS

December 2020

Ken Leggett has asked me to circulate the attached invitation for young farmers to apply for the Chris Lewis Award 2021. Anyone under 30 known to you can apply by 1st March to win £6000 under the auspices of the Norfolk Farmers Trust. Chris was much respected for his breeding and judging of Texel and Rouge de l'Ouest sheep from his Windmill Farm at Erpingham. He was also Chairman of Aldborough Cricket Club and is much missed after his death from cancer in 2007. His widow Jane fronts the biennial competition which, appropriately perhaps, has been dominated by sheep farmers although the first winner raised Dexter cattle. Chris's first wife, also Jane, lives at Edingthorpe and invented the Peaceful Pyramid Birdscarer. He was a contemporary of John Snow, the England pace bowler, at Christ's Hospital public school in Sussex and they shared a combative playing style even though both were sons of vicars.



Meanwhile I've been drawn back to the backwaters of Heydon where ghost villages accompany ghost ponds. In respect of the latter I should have mentioned **Eddy Pye** who, with his son Jonathan, is another member who has co-operated with Dr Sayer in restoring ponds at Beerhouse Farm between Heydon and Cawston. Cifford, Eddy's father, was our Chairman in the 1980s and would let local lads fish here in what became known as Pye's Pit. I'm not sure whether this is an old marl pit or a kettle (hole) lake formed by a large block as the ice retreated. Bluestone Plantation is close by to the east where, as I reported, the blue stones found there may have been glacial erratics. There are other mysteries here. You might think Beerhouse refers to an old pub but Bryant's map of 1826 shows one on the Holt Road east of here whereas Faden's Map of 1797 refers to Bear House Farm which might mean that there was once bear-baiting in these parts. Also in 1826 there was a dramatic culmination to the 'Poaching Wars' when the 'Co(ste)sseyGang' vied with the Heydon keepers based at Bluestone Hall cottage. In the time of the Captain Swing riots and general rural unrest at unemployment and poor working conditions this became known as the Heydon Affray although the poachers were more scallywags than downtrodden and horny handed sons of the soil. Estate staff were recruited as a posse in Blackbridge Wood but the poachers chased them off to Seaman's Farm. Although a keeper was 'done over' and several shots fired it is believed that the only fatality was one of the poachers although no body was found. The arrival of further reinforcements meant that the gang was finally arrested and sentenced to death at Thetford by Justice Sir Stephen Gaselee although this was commuted to transportation.



Justice Sir Stephen Gaselee

This was followed in 1832 by an outbreak of cholera at Cawston and Eastgate, the hamlet to the south, resulting in 14 deaths. Geographical perversities are relatively common in Norfolk; for instance the eastern part of Briston is known as West End. Sygate is sometimes a corruption of the placename Southgate which is the cluster of cottages and bungalows close to Beerhouse Farm but north of Cawston. Eddy favours Sygate and I'd like to think he is correct, though perhaps because Sygate has another derivation. He lives at the oddly named Dix's Farm on the B1149 beyond the site of a Roman fort. Sygate / Southgate was a deserted medieval settlement before, in 1853, a white mill for grinding corn was built alongside a black mill that was initially used as a sawmill – similar to the ones at Corpusty. By 1955 these were redundant but when the black mill was demolished the winch rope broke so that the white one was saved and has since been converted into a holiday home. Sygate is sandwiched between two other lost villages; Stinton lay to the west next to Salle while Alvington may have been in Harrold country around Docking Farm east of the B1149 although some think it lay closer to Cawston. Long before this the Romans built their road between Billingford and Brampton through here on a similar trajectory to Marriott's Way along the dismantled railway section between Foulsham and Aylsham.

Tim

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Dr Carl Sayer

Pye's Pit ?