

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Bill Poortvliet

Chairman: Pat Cubitt

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

71st ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING at 8p.m. on Tuesday, 12th October, 2021 and CLUB MATTERS October 2021

"Let the bells ring out !" We're back after 18 miserable months and **Michael Pollitt** alerted me to the opportune fact that BBC Radio 4's latest Bells on Sunday was broadcast from St. Andrew's, Holt. Our double whammy is *covid-19* and being evicted from The Feathers after 73 years. This is greatly regrettable but not unforeseen. Harrie Morshuis, the Feathers proprietor, has extended his weekly steak nights to a particular cuisine on each weekday for which he requires the Gresham's Suite. There are no obvious alternative venues in Holt so we are heading out of town to Holt Rugby Club (HRFC) in Bridge Road, High Kelling. They have developed first class facilities over recent years and with the close connection between our two clubs we hope that this can become our new venue on a permanent basis. **Rob Hughes** is their new Chairman while **David Hitcham** B.E.M. has been a big help in devising a workable arrangement. We aim to keep the second Tuesday of the month as our default date so we start with our upcoming *Annual General Meeting at 8 o'clock on Tuesday, 12th October*. However there will have to be certain compromises and in November HRFC need the venue on the Tuesday so that our meeting will be on *Wednesday, 10th November* to hear *Nick Padwick* (see below). Unfortunately this clashes with Stalham's joint NFU meeting but **Chris Borrett** as Chairman and **Michael Pollitt** as my oppo have had a similar struggle so that, coincidentally, they are also decamping to the local rugby club - at North Walsham.

We are hugely indebted to **Richard Brooks** so it is a delight and an honour that he has agreed to be installed as our new President at the A.G.M. He hails from the southern end of East Anglia where his family firm supplied seed through Essex, Suffolk and into Norfolk. Alongside a career in the insurance industry he kept a small herd of bucolic Herefords at Church Farm, Edgefield. Sadly he lost his wife Anne a few years ago and he has now settled in Holt having sold the farm. It was Tendring Hundred Farmers' Club in Richard's home patch who gave us the idea of a Student Day and Richard ran this successfully for several years after **Ken Leggett** and before **Rob Hughes**. With his friends in high places Richard has been behind many of our best events such as our visits to Elveden and Euston Estates as well as, most memorably, James Dyson's Beeswax Farming operation in Lincolnshire.

This is precipitated by **Bill Poortvliet's** decision to stand down after an amazing 40 years' service to the club; no member has done more. An early move of his was to do away with the dancing on Ladies' Night as it was then allowed to be called. Bill has always been generous in hosting farm walks (or rides rather)



around his Stratton Streles estate, organising trips to Essex and other parts including a fantastic trip to Hungary when we saw his Spearhead operation. Added to this he let us use Colby for our early Student Days while he was winning national potato growing competitions and leading other events like Aylsham Show. Latterly his claim to fame has been as grandfather of the Leicester rugger prodigy Jack van Poortvliet. It is typical of Bill's attitude that he chose to continue as a committee member when he became our fourth President in 2015 after 9 years as Chairman. It has troubled him greatly that the pandemic has compounded the problems we were already facing and he has set a great example for us to follow and win things round.

Accordingly I formally invite all members to our 71st A.G.M. as set out on the attached / enclosed Agenda starting at 8 o'clock at the new venue. Because it is two years since the last A.G.M. there are three committee members: **Stuart Ross**, **Jimmy Fowell** and **William Youngs** up for re-election. Unfortunately **Charlie Mack** has resigned on account of a change of circumstances after six years for which we are most appreciative. We hope that he will keep involved as a member and even return in due course as we desperately need vibrant people of the younger generations. This means there are two vacancies and we have gone for experience while hoping that other members will come forward. **John Cragg** is a club stalwart who ran our Malting Barley Competition for many years before handing over to his Adams & Howling colleague **Chris Borrett**. He has been helping President Bill collect samples and we hope **Bob King** will find a good standard in spite of the poor weather at harvest. The other candidate is **Martin Jensen** who has been a great club man in the mould of our President. He led our trips to his native Finland as well as to France although visiting his Ukraine operations may be a step too far.

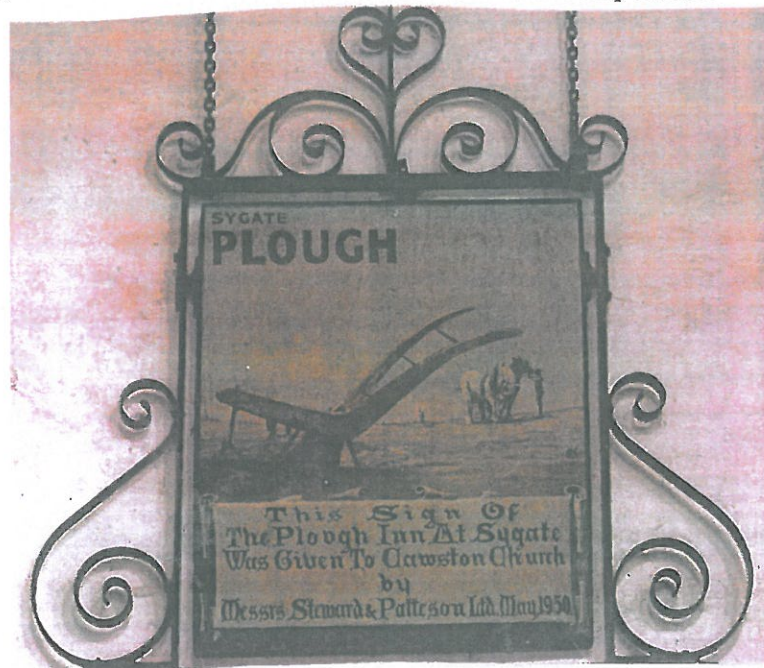


As an interlude I, for one, am looking forward to seeing a photographic presentation from Chris Taylor. He is the son of the ornithologist Moss Taylor from Sheringham and has been in the news recently after snorkelling there and photographing a coaster that was shipwrecked 125 years ago. He has also been to the Maasai Mara in Kenya and seems to be a really interesting guy like his father. **Pat Cubitt** will be in charge and, while he is unhappy that we have had to move, he was keen to try to keep to Tuesdays for the sake of continuity – even when Norwich City are playing at home as they are on 14th December. Our President Elect has lined up *Poul Hovesen*, surely the foremost farmer in Norfolk, who we are delighted will be coming for the first time (our oversight) on that Tuesday. In similar vein is *Nick Padwick* from the Ken Hill Estate between Heacham and Snettisham where BBC Springwatch came from this year. He is creating a stir with his regenerative farm management in which inputs are minimised through rotations, reducing soil disturbance, sheep grazing and intercropping. Nick is another of Richard's coups as is the visit to *Shropshire* on Wednesday, 22nd June next year.





It is likely that there will be a full turnout for Robin Combe's Memorial Service which is being held at Blakeney Church on Saturday, 9th October at 2 o'clock. It has been suggested that you could bring your own seat to hear about Robin's full life which will no doubt include references to his *lese majeste* and self-confessed missteps as well as his achievements. At the other end of our district is the even more impressive church at Cawston which I visited recently in the wake of **Mark Cook** and **Philip Jones** following the Bluestone theme. In fact the said bluestone is white and unremarkable outside the porch but inside the high hammerbeams and rood screen more than compensate.



While Northrepps and Elsing have their gallus ploughs St. Agnes' Cawston has a fine display of *God Speed the Plough* above the Sygate Plough. This celebrates the eternal connection between the ploughman's thirsty work in growing the barley that, before these days of ploughman's lunches, they would then imbibe in pints at the Plough Inn. This was the alehouse a mile to the north where the Plough G(u)ild may have met; it may have opened as a response to the local outbreak of cholera in 1832 to sell small or weak beer as the brewing process would at least have decontaminated the local water supply. Steward & Patteson closed it in 1950. There is also a theory that the name Sygate is not a corruption of Southgate but rather a word of Anglo Saxon origin for a ploughed or rough lane.

One of our female members **Jane Kenny**, has switched from Savills to ADAS and is keen to come and address us in the New Year. As soon as we've got the other speakers and the dates confirmed you will be informed and we hope the dates will be 11th January, 8th February and 8th March at 7.30. It will be great to have as many of you back as possible – there is a bar.

Tim

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