

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Richard Brooks

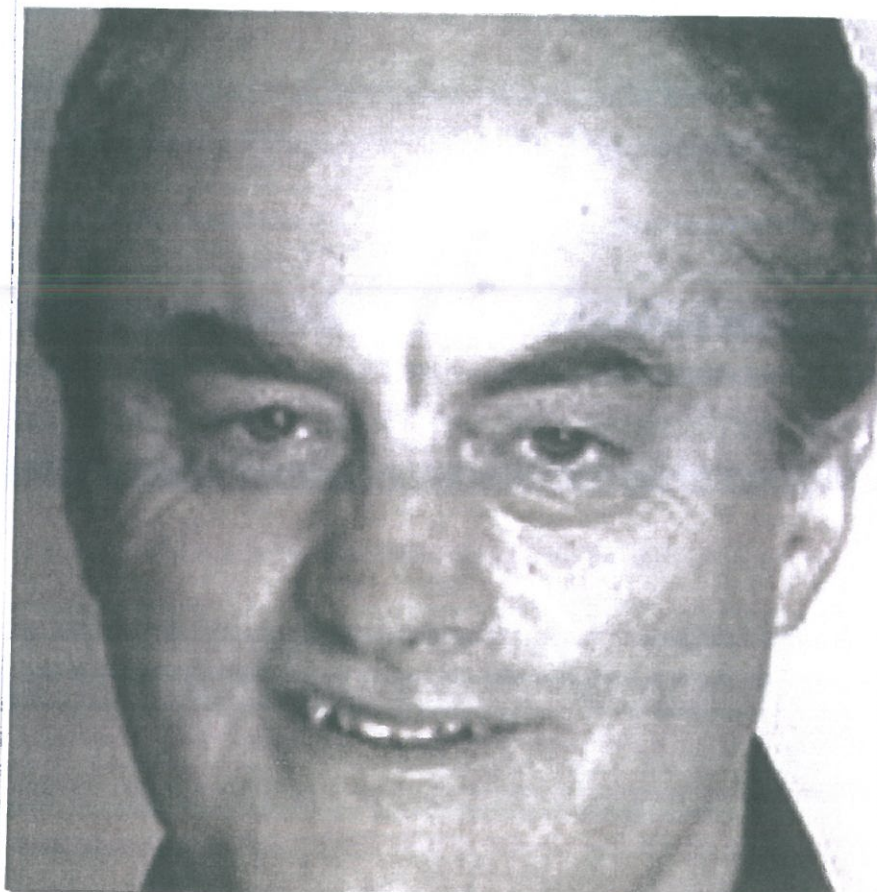
Chairman: Pat Cubitt

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS November 2021

It was encouraging how many of you attended our recent AGM at Holt Rugby Club – thanks for that. Among the twenty enjoying the meal beforehand it was good to see club stalwarts like **Charles Skinner** and **Colin Ross** back in the fold. It was appropriate that **Jack Hammond** was also there as the meeting started with a minute's silence in remembrance of his father Billy – our lamented past President. Our **Chairman Pat Cubitt** referred to other members whom we have lost since our 2019 AGM :- Ian Ross, George Cushing, John Neill, John Perry-Warnes, Richard Waddingham and Jim Agnew while non members like Robin Combe, Edwin Jones, Greg Anderson and Henry Jones were also in our thoughts. Apologies for absence were received from a dozen members including **Rob Hughes** who, as the new President of Holt Rugby Club, had wished us well in our new venue. There were no matters arising from my minutes of the 2019 AGM which wasn't surprising considering the time that had elapsed. In my Secretary's report I thanked **Tony Williams** for his contribution as Treasurer for well over a quarter of a century. He has endured a double whammy with a head on crash on his way back from Gloucestershire to add to a run of poor health but he remains very much in control of our Club's finances which remain on an even keel. This may not be surprising after eighteen months of inactivity and Larking Gowen were good enough to audit our accounts again with **David Cunningham** being accompanied by young Laurie Hill who is an agricultural specialist at their Fakenham office and has the background of his family's arable farm at Bradenham.



Tony Williams

*Hon. Treasurer
and
Glos. Farmer*

There were no volunteer candidates for the committee so we were pleased to have past Chairmen **Stuart Ross** and **Jimmy Fowell** re-elected for another four years along with the peripatetic **William Youngs**. They are joined by **Martin Jensen** who is pictured as a champion goose producer at Church Farm, G(u/e?)estwick where he has also been involved with the Norfolk (ghost) Ponds Project. After winning promotion from the Second Division with Middlesbrough in 1974 (surely some mistake ?, Ed.) it is great that we now also have **John Cragg**, the instigator of our Malting Barley Competition, on the committee. His protégé at Adams & Howling **Chris Borrett** thanked him and **Bill Poortvliet** when introducing the 2021 Competition results with judge **Bob King**. This was for their efforts in securing fully 48 samples which is three times the number in 2019. The winner this year was **Ed Jones** from Witchingham who took the Mott-Radclyffe Cup for the spring section ahead of **Tom Randell** and **Stuart Ross** with all three growing Flagon. The winner of the winter section was **Melton Harrold** growing Laureate with **Martin Fisher** as the perennial runner up (devil take the hindmost for growing Diablo) while **Eddie Pye** in third place also grew Laureate. **Richard Brooks** brought a late – or should I say ‘early’ – entry which had been grown at Six Mile Bottom near Newmarket and won the Best International Sample at The Toronto Winter Fair in 1959. Bob’s verdict was that it would have won but **Ed Jones** advances as Holt’s entry for the sample-off against Stalham next year. As for the 2021 entries Bob congratulated the entrants on matching the high quality of 2019 and increasing yields in spite of difficult growing and harvesting conditions. *covid* has decreased the demand for beer, especially cask ale, but spring barley will be in demand and prices of £200 a tonne are possible. Poor harvests in Canada, Australia and Argentina might help but Great Ryburgh is a high energy consumer so that record prices and container problems will reduce margins – in the short term at least.



Ed Jones

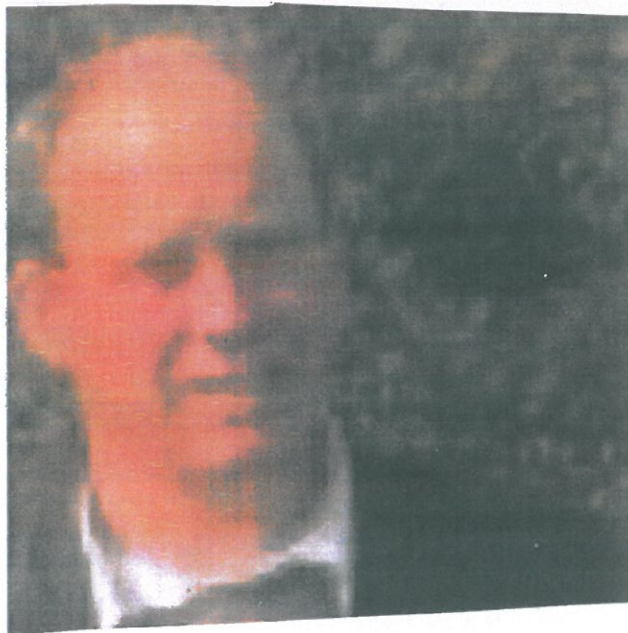
*Harold Jones Farms Ltd.
Witchingham*

Chris Taylor then brought us a fascinating and most professional presentation on a project involving the Kenyan Maasai Mara. Ekokkishu Reserve has been rewilded from unsatisfactory arable farming that was only possible with irrigation, to responsible tourism. This was proving successful until *covid* intervened and still seems a far better approach. There was a problem with the local farmers poisoning the big cats that took their cattle but they are slowly being persuaded that they can also benefit from tourism. A local lad has designed a device resembling a flashing torch that is attached to the kraals where the cattle are kept overnight. This has proved remarkably effective in deterring the big cats and the club was pleased to pay £150 for one of these simple but ingenious items. **Andrew Ross** gave a vote of thanks that was extended to Alistair and Julie along with the others at Holt Rugby Club who had all helped towards a successful evening.

We were then onto the main event being the Changing of the Guard. **Pat Cubitt** highlighted **Bill Poortvliet's** unmatched 50 years – including 40 years on the Committee, 9 as Chairman and 6 as President – making him the true stalwart of our Club. His understated but hugely effective contribution was reflected in his short speech. Churchill made a rather unfair remark in calling Attlee “a modest man with much to be modest about” whereas I feel it would be fair to call Bill “a modest man with little to be modest about” considering all he has contributed as I have outlined previously. He bemoaned the losses of recent years including the Ploughing Match, Student Day, bowls matches and now eviction from The Feathers. He admitted that he was never going to emulate Sir Charles Mott-Radclyffe or Billy Hammond but he had enjoyed his time as President in spite of everything. His constant aim has been to recruit new members – the young and female especially – and he says he will be watching from the sidelines.

Bill's successor **Richard Brooks** expressed similar sentiments – aware that in his youth a 200 acre farm would be worked by 5 men whereas today an acreage ten times that size may only require 2 men. He is concerned about mental health and stressed the need to speak to our neighbours; in periods of stress we can also use YANA, RABI and other sources of help. Richard concluded by admitting that he isn't entirely sure what being President entails other than keeping the Chairman in order. Pat then concluded the evening by suggesting that members and guests should be able to join us for dinner before meetings and the cost, where applicable, is reasonable according to Tony at £25 per head including drinks. **Jimmy Fowell** had said that he only really started to enjoy being Chairman in his third year so we very much hope that this proves so for Pat.

Martin Jensen



*Tsar of The Ukraine
Flying Finn
Worthy of Worthing*

Please use our website for information on upcoming meetings and events as well as other relevant matters. The exciting programme for our winter season is posted there starting with **Nick Padwick next Wednesday at 7.30 on 10th November**. With **Poul Hovesen appearing on Tuesday, 14th December** we could scarcely have found two more dynamic and innovative estate managers to kick things off. Our gender policy was questioned by Norfolk born **Christine Tacon** before she agreed to return **on Tuesday, 8th February**. Fortunately we were able to tell her that **Jane Kenny**, now of ADAS, will precede her on **Tuesday, 11th January** and she is a member. To round off our season on **Tuesday, 8th March** we have **Rob Mutimer** who will have some very topical tales to tell as the current Chairman of the National Pig Association. **All meetings are at 7.30 at Holt Rugby Club** and we look forward to seeing you all again.

Tim

P.S. I've received another alert about DEFRA's Future Farm Resilience Scheme which one or two members have already taken up. This is the free on farm consultancy to assist you in assessing upcoming changes such as the loss of BPS by 2027 and the likely income loss through ELMs. Andrew **Spinks** based in Norwich but farming with his father **Ian** - now moved from Langham to Erpingham – is the contact on 07880 471259 and defraffr@brown-co.com

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