

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Richard Brooks

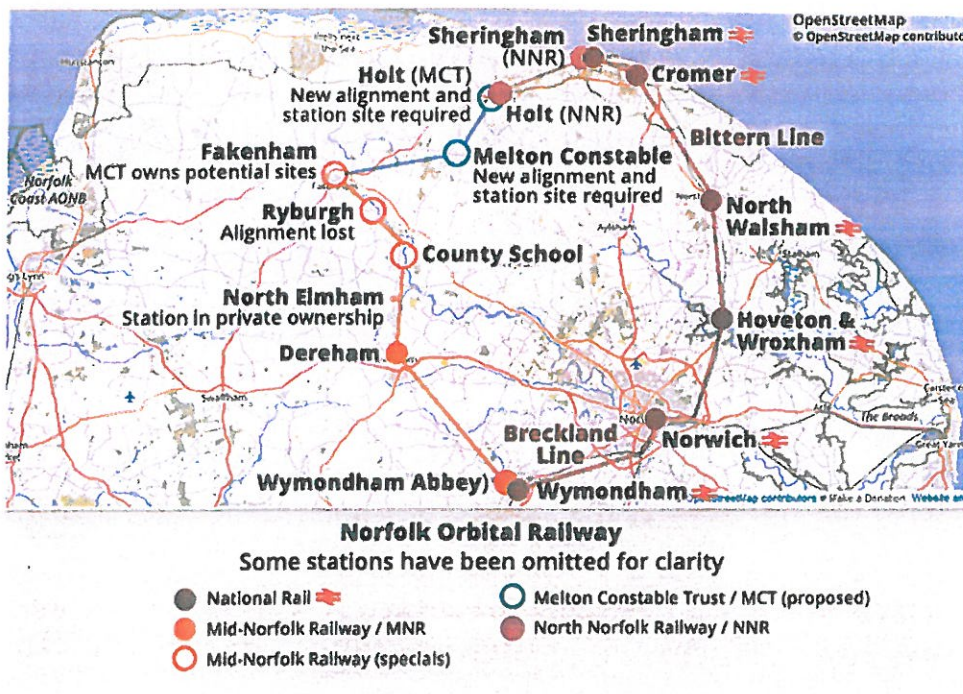
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Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

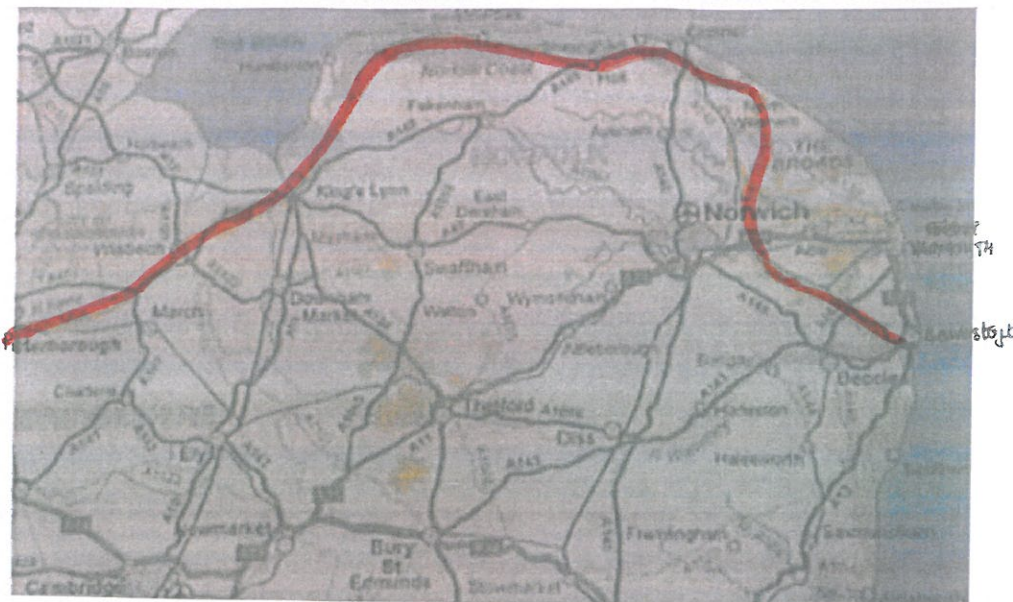
CLUB MATTERS December 2021

Nick Padwick and his colleague Lloyd Park gave us a grand evening last month with a positive exposition of what they are already achieving at Wild Ken Hill and the lessons we can learn about regenerative farming alongside nature conservation. Nick takes a long term approach and acknowledges what the previous manager achieved through not using insecticides since 2011. He is now trying to minimise the use of fungicides and growth regulators while hoping to stop using synthetic fertilisers by 2025. He employs poly or intercropping, weather analysis, soil testing and controlled traffic – timing is key. “Yield is vanity, profit is sanity” could be his motto and he spoke a lot of sense. The introduction of sea eagles is still being weighed up but there are already beavers and Nick has indicated that we would be welcome to make a visit next year which we are keen to take him up on. **Martin Jensen**, one of our new committee and a keen conservationist himself, gave the vote of thanks.



On **Tuesday** we are back at the Rugby Club with *Poul Hovesen* giving his first talk to our club, a sorry oversight on our part. He needs little introduction as he controls the farming over large swathes of Norfolk and, like Nick, has progressive and interesting views on the way ahead. Talking of big players it is good to see **Tom Dye** as the Chief Executive Officer of Albanwise Farming Ltd. while a Farm and Estate Manager is being sought by Salle Farms. Then in the New Year we are back at Bridge Road for **Jane Kenny** and her *ADAS team including Thomas Lonsdale and John Gadsby* on **Tuesday, 11th January – again at 7.30 p.m.** **Philip Jones** once worked for ADAS who have been going for 75 years which is a couple of years longer than us. With her background rearing pigs near Aylsham and working for Savills Jane will have a lot to impart along with her colleagues.

The latest on our abbreviated residency at The Feathers is that our eviction is not necessarily terminal. The Chestnut Group will review things next year when I presume they will be refurbishing the place; we were offered the Plume Restaurant which is the room near the front door but this was considered too small. They also own The Maltings at Weybourne and The Globe at Wells along with ten or so other hostelries around East Anglia. If we do get back I hope they will provide farmers' fare and not just *nouvelle cuisine*. In the flat next door the books that did for poor Paul Brooke have finally been cleared and, while I haven't seen the *post mortem*, I have refined my take on the literary link. I referred to Dickens's character Krook who spontaneously combusted but I should have named Leonard Bast from E. M. Forster's *Howards' End*. Len was played by Samuel West in the Merchant Ivory film of the book featuring Anthony Hopkins and Emma Thompson while Howard's End was the house where his character meets his end near the end of the book by taking a tome from a shelf causing the whole bookcase to topple on top of him. While this was hardly Tennyson's "wearing all that weight of learning like a flower", unless he meant a pressed one, this may have been what happened to **Mike Plumb's** long lost cousin. Sorry - I had to get that off my chest.



These ramblings are a lead up to my annual suggestion for a book at Christmas. My choice is "Woodston – The Biography of an English Farm" by John Lewis-Stempel, the prolific author who many of you will have come across. To an extent he has similar views to Messrs. Padwick and Hovesen in believing that the only sustainable farming is mixed, non-intensive and not dependent on 'icides'. As a journalist and diarist who was in the army he has written movingly about aspects of the First and Second World Wars. He farms in Herefordshire and Woodston is a nearby holding between Ludlow and Worcester in the lee of the Malvern Hills and where he has family connections. This Sunday Times bestseller is a fascinating, lyrical history of a quintessential English Farm that paints a picture reflecting farming's progress throughout the whole country. He has also written about the secret life of iconic animals such as the hare and the fox as well as meadows and ponds. I'm eagerly awaiting *The Sheep's Tale* which is due out from him next year.

Meanwhile Holt is in stop start mode. Eighteen months after perhaps the worst fire since the Byfords Fire of 1906 work has finally started on the new Budgens. However it may be another eighteen months before this is completed since that is how long the planning permission for the pop-up supermarket is looking to be extended. Also in it for the long term is the Melton Constable Trust which still holds out hope of completing the orbital route round Norfolk. This has been advanced by the recent acquisition of the length between the Holt Station at High Kelling and the Holt bypass. I haven't heard much about the light railway that Duncan Baker said he would welcome running across High Norfolk. There are still optimists around which is good to know during these gloomy times so my very best wishes for a Happy Christmas and a much merrier New Year.

Tim

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