

# HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Richard Brooks

Chairman: Pat Cubitt

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

[www.holtfarmers.club](http://www.holtfarmers.club)

## CLUB MATTERS February 2022

I'm pleased to confirm that we are back in action on *Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> February* with *Christine Tacon* making a return visit accompanied by Helen Whittle, Holt resident and Procurement and Commercial Director at the AF Group where Christine is a non-executive director. This is in addition to her roles as Groceries Code Adjudicator and Chair of the Red Tractor Assurance Scheme – *7.30 at Holt Rugby Club*. **Richard Brooks**, now listed on our homeless Honours Board, has loaned me an advance copy of *'The Norfolk Farm Machinery Club and mechanical farming 1946- 1965'* by David Cleveland. This well illustrated book contains lots of familiar names and fascinating snippets about this revolutionary period in local agriculture. One character who features regularly is Ray Allen who farmed 117 acres at Cley. He was well known for his 'Norfolk Squit' and featured on TV as well as in a short film from the East Anglian Film Archive that is easy to find on t'internet. As he was a client of mine and I lived near him I became aware of his interesting history as 'a lovable rogue'. He grew parsley and apparently he would give the lorry driver who came to collect it an EDP with a fiver inside to keep him occupied long enough for Ray to run a hose over the parsley to double its weight by absorbing water. In the infamous winter of 1963 he came up with the successful ruse of spreading rock salt over his frozen sugar beet crop so that he could lift it. He might have gotten the idea from ten years earlier when free gypsum was offered by the government for farmers to spread on the land after the great flood – although that was the reverse in PH terms. Another episode in the long life of 'Fagan'(children were somehow attracted to this rustic farmer) was when he hosted an archery event for Young Farmers which was abruptly curtailed when he shot an arrow through a girl's leg. That was an accident but when he shot his wife while cleaning his gun suspicions were raised; both survived fortunately.



HENRY WILLIAMSON'S 'TRACTOR' IN FOREGROUND



The Farm Machinery Club book includes a picture of a car being used to pull a hoe in the 1930s. This reminds me of Henry Williamson's doomed attempts to retrieve Old Hall Farm at Stiffkey where he used his Alvis Silver Eagle sports car to pull harrows. He was another controversial character who otherwise used the vehicle to attend clandestine meetings ... of fascists. Reading his classic *The Story of a Norfolk Farm* it is difficult not to feel some sympathy for the author of *Tarka the Otter* who struggled with recalcitrant locals, thistles and his own inexperience. However he had been warned about his misguided notions - both agricultural and political. At the front of his wartime account there is a quotation "Going to farm? My dear fellow, whatever for? You'll lose your money. Farming's dead in England. Everyone will tell you that!". The book was published in 1941 with Williamson continuing to write articles in the EDP and he was proud that the Ministry had assessed Old Hall Farm as a top grade holding by the time he returned to Devon. He spent a lot of time draining the long curved stretch of water meadows of the river Stiffkey which is on the left when driving along the A149 coast road from Morston. Aubrey Buxton, the local Lord of Survival and Anglia TV fame, subsequently undid all Williamson's work by creating what is known as Stiffkey Fen there as a haven for birdlife.



The column at the gravel-washing plant the next morning, with the Silver Eagle towing the 'old pattern of caravan' (an Eccles), and the Morris lorry to which was attached the trailer, on which lay the dinghy covered by a green cloth.

Finally I'm sad to report the death of Lorna Ross, Ian's widow and mother of **Stuart** and **Diana**. The Ross clan, including two great grandchildren will be at her funeral in Edgefield Church at 2 o'clock on Thursday, 3<sup>rd</sup> February. There won't be room inside for everyone I'm afraid; Canon Marcon should have commissioned a bigger church when they moved it from the foot of the hill towards Hunworth. Lorna was a lovely lady, sister of the much missed Richard Riseborough from Hillington who died almost ten years ago while nephew **Alastair Wagg** keeps our flag flying in the west of the county.

*Tim*

Hon. Secretary: Tim Nicholson 1a Market Place Holt Norfolk NR25 6BE Tel. 01263 711167 (work)  
email: [tim\\_nicholson@ymail.com](mailto:tim_nicholson@ymail.com)

Hon. Treasurer: Tony Williams Red Roofs Ipswich Road Newton Flotman Norwich Norfolk NR15 1PN  
Mob. 07818017864 email: [tony.williams@brandiston.co.uk](mailto:tony.williams@brandiston.co.uk)