

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Richard Brooks

Chairman: Martin Jensen

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS December 2023

Here is another reminder about next Tuesday's meeting at which there will be audio-visuals and the intention is to avoid it all being doom and gloom as we approach the shortest day of the year.

1. **Henry Kilvert** is our speaker on *Rural Mental Health – 7.30 on a Tuesday 12th December at Holt Rugby Club*. Henry is *YANA's* Chair of Trustees and farms at Little Dunham between Dereham and Swaffham. **Richard Brooks** made it one of the aims for his Presidency that we should promote the valuable services that the likes of *YANA* provide - especially after the *COVID-19* pandemic exacerbated the problems we were already facing. **Michael Pollitt** has also spoken to us about his own battle with depression in the past while remaining a strong advocate that help is out there.

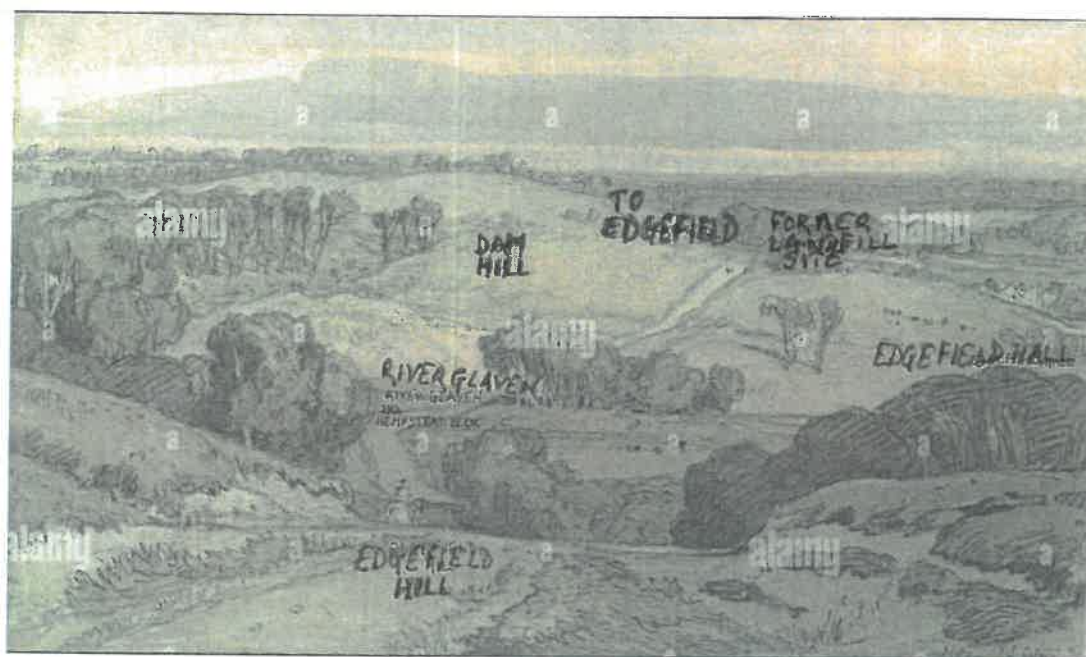
2. **HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS CLUB 75th ANNIVERSARY DINNER at GRESHAM's** Plans are coming together for our Big Event next spring on *Thursday, 11th April, 2024* further details to follow.

3. **TRIP to SWEDEN from Wednesday 28th May to Saturday 1st June, 2024** We have had a fair number of members registering for this long awaited event but further names are needed by or at our next meeting please.



This may not be the best time of year for a perambulation through local parishes but I hope you will find a short trip down the B1149 from Holt to Edgefield diverting no matter what the form of transport. While Holt has got its sole supermarket back after a three year wait the town is still struggling in certain respects. Over 10 years ago a second one was approved on the old Holt Station / Thaxter's site along with a new car and coach park down the B1110 Thornage Road. Neither of these have gone ahead nor has the filling station that was approved along what is now the Holt bypass. Until the 1980s this was the redundant railway cutting along which the Norfolk Orbital Railway Project still wishes to re-establish a line even though there is now a second roundabout to contend with. This is the A148 Cromer Road and, according to a recent feature in *The Times*, referred to by locals as a "Berlin wall" although I have never heard this in 44 years working here. That paper is running a Christmas appeal in support of a charity called *Feeding Britain* which operates a pop-up supermarket that also visits local villages on a daily basis. ***The Holt Youth Project, our visitors on 9th January***, also operates a food bank in this vicinity which could be termed 'the wrong side of the (dismantled) tracks'. The feature contrasts this with *Bakers & Larners* which the writer claims is nick-named the "Harrods of Norfolk" (another thing I've never heard) and the £40,000-a-year fees at Gresham's where Sir James Dyson has just donated £35 million. On the other hand last month *The Daily Telegraph* rated Holt the second prettiest town in the country which may have been helped by the fact that all the banks have now gone – apart from the food ones that is.

As one leaves the town on the B1149 Norwich Road one passes the unmanned police station that is due to be replaced by housing on the site of Echo Pits (me neither) according to Faden's Map of 1798. If one continued south down the Hunworth Road one can see the outdoor pigs of the ubiquitous Baker Brothers that are destined for Waitrose I guess. The Brothers, trading as North Farm Livestock, have obtained planning permission for two dwellings for their workers within 11 months which contrasts markedly with the Aldborough site where the pig application is still undetermined after 44 months. Incidentally the Heydon poultry application that I have also been tracking is also undetermined after 33 months with nothing posted online for a year. Porkyculture may be a good use for the free-draining reclaimed land that has been worked by Cemex around the charmingly named Duckshole Farm while residential development at this end of Holt was refused a generation ago.



The B1149 bends south-eastwards through Holt Country Park where there was a racecourse until the mid-nineteenth century. Recently white ponies and British White cattle have been used by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust to preserve Holt Lowes, a haven for butterflies and dragonflies, as Lowland Heath. The feudal rights of the townsfolk to gather firewood and take ground game were scandalously removed by the local gentry when the shooting and sporting rights were let on an exclusive basis. Near the end of the long straight through the trees the sign marking where deer cross has gone and then there is Edgefield Hill where the horseman is descending on the scene painted by John Sell Cotman in 1818. It would have been a hard pull for a team of horses heading north to Holt with a notice for ascending horse drivers to 'Slacken Bearing Reins'. This is where the road crosses the river Glaven which was straightened as Hempstead Beck between the watermill upstream at Smokers Hole and the lakes downstream at Edgefield Hall. Dead ahead lies Dam Hill Plantation, apparently named after ancient works altering the flow of the Glaven, where Gerald Gent created a trio of ponds in postwar times and where controversy now reigns. These 15 acres were sold last year for more per acre than the nearby farmland has sold for this and have been turned into a campsite with shepherd's huts but no sheep. The Parish and District Councils, primarily for highway safety and conservation reasons, are not happy and an Enforcement Order has been served. This happened in spite of a negative response to a PreApp while, on the opposite Edgefield Hall side of the B1149, another PreApp to replace a workshop with two dwellings was also responded to negatively. It is perhaps less likely that this will be ignored.

The railways never came to Edgefield and the arterial B1149 follows G K Chesterton's poetic phrase that "the rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road". Fatalities have occurred at the turn next to the former landfill site with the Ross family's Valley Farm being on a notorious length before a 90 degree right hand bend. Norfolk County Council had a scheme to bypass these bends with a road behind Potter's Farm opposite but that, like the Letheringsett bypass, never got beyond the drawing board stage. Cycling was the mode of transport chosen by Canon Marcon after whom the social housing at the top of the hill is named. In the middle of the village a member of the family of Charles Sands - our former Vice Chairman - has been refused permission for a dog exercising field. Edgefield isn't big enough to be allowed new private infill housing although people still try. Class Q consent has been refused on a Dutch barn and the well known and popular chairman of this parish has been driven into retirement by all the planning controversy. The Pigs welcomes visitors with a whiff of blocked drains as one approaches while combining with Edgefield Garden Centre to uglify the southern end where there is another Valley Farm to confuse everyone. This autumn a car was stuck in a roadside hedge (briefly a second one was stuck in the hedge opposite and near more Baker baconers) beyond Dotsel, the group of cottages opposite the turning to Edgefield (Ramsgate) Street. A mile further on is Shrubbs Farm where NNDC have already spent even longer handling an application for a poultry operation with an associated dwelling than the one at Heydon. These three miles of the B1149 through Edgefield parish would make a fantastic motorcycle course but the planning process here seems equally tortuous.



This year I have two book suggestions for Christmas since they neatly complete a circle. *New York to California* is not American as this New York is north of Boston, Lincs. and California is the coastal holiday resort north of Great Yarmouth. Norfolk author Jeremy Page wrote a bestseller *Salt* which was a novel set around Blakeney and this is an intriguing travelogue of his walk "looking for the not quite visible". Conveniently Laurence Mitchell, an experienced travel writer, has walked from Great Yarmouth in the opposite direction along "the footways and folkways" across the south of the county and beyond in his more traditional but equally interesting account entitled *Westering*.

Tim

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