

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

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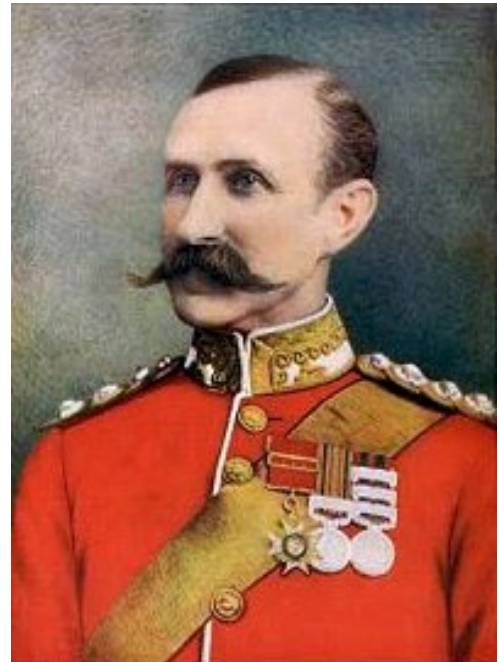
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CLUB MATTERS Midsummer 2024

St Swithin's Day is not until 15th July but it appears to have come a couple of months early judging by the fact that it has rained almost every day for the last forty if not longer. Apparently May was the hottest on record but this was because the clouds that made it dull and wet also stopped the earth's heat from escaping overnight. At least the excessive rainfall seems less damaging to our corn crops than drought judging by the wheatfields around my happy hunting ground centred on the Bluestone part of the Heydon Estate. **Chris Harrold** has enticed me back here with a copy of the 1951 auction particulars for the Cawston Manor Estate when his father Ernest acquired Docking Farm in 370 acres. Today, 16th June, is the 73rd anniversary of the sale. The farmhouse was divided into two with five bedrooms in total but no mains water or electricity. There was a full set of cattle and other buildings, two pairs of semi-detached cottages and a bungalow with almost £23,000 being the price paid.



GEORGE CAWSTON



GENERAL SIR WILLIAM PENN SYMONS

The farm is sandwiched between the old Eastern Midland (later the M&GNJt) Railway route from Melton Constable via the Bluestone bend and Aylsham to North Walsham and the old western extension of the Great Eastern Railway East Norfolk line from Reepham to Wroxham which is now part of Marriott's Way. In 1896 soon after these railways were built the Bulwer family of Heydon sold the Cawston Park Estate in 125 acres to George Cawston who had only discovered it was for sale by chance and, since the manorial rights were included, fancied having the title Cawston of Cawston. He was a rich American born barrister and stockbroker from London who was one of the founding directors of the British South Africa Company along with Cecil Rhodes with whom he was to fall out. Chris has also lent me a magazine on the Boer War dated December 1899 which has some lovely titbits. The war wasn't going well after the defeat at Nicholson's Nek (a stretch of high ground like a kop) and before the Siege of Ladysmith. At the earlier Battle of Rietfontein the ladies of Natal had cycled out to watch the action in white dresses making them a target for Boer snipers so the British army erected a placard warning "This Hill is Dangerous". Another brave but foolish soldier was General Sir William Penn Symons who said Nelson had made himself a marked man by pacing the deck of The Victory while wearing all his decorations and having his backbone shot through. Never- the less he tried to emulate him "by riding out with an orderly who was carrying a lance and red pennon" and this did attract the attention of the Boer marksmen. At the Battle of Talana Hill the General was annoyed at the impudence of the Boers in attacking before breakfast but if he was to get shot he was determined that it should be when facing the enemy. He finally got a bullet in the stomach but told his second-in-command "my accident is slight and I will be out again tomorrow".

In fact he died an agonising death three days later as a prisoner of war but received glowing plaudits from a young reporter called Winston Churchill. There is also a note that "the Boer does not like cold steel and will not wait for a bayonet charge if he can help it" which is surely where Lance Corporal Jones's catchphrase "They don't like it up 'em" comes from. Perry & Croft who created Dad's Army were stretching things when referring to the Fuzzy Wuzzies as they were in the Sudan campaign around 1884/5, fifteen years earlier, and it might have made more sense to refer to the Boers as being uncomfortable at the prospect. Incidentally the magazine confirms that the bayonet is named after the French town Bayonne after a Basque regiment, with their ammunition exhausted, improvised by fixing their long knives into the barrel of their muskets.



OULTON STREET LOOKING NORTH



LOOKING WEST BLUESTONE PLANTATION

Meanwhile George Cawston had done a lot for the village by 1900 when his son Cecil left for The Cape and was killed in action in February 1901 prompting him to commission a memorial stained-glass window in Norwich Cathedral. Having built the Manor House aka Cawston Manor (later Cawston College) in 1896/7 the grieving George Cawston and his wife Mary subsequently returned to London and the Bulwer family must have acquired the property in the mid twentieth century as it was included in the

1951 auction. The brochure wrongly states that the place "was built in about 1910" while a cost of some £45,000 is quoted. Interestingly "The Docking" Farm had been included in an auction for the Heydon Estate in 1910 when the two pairs of cottages were "newly-erected" and the farm comprised "compactly-lying mixed lands". It was withdrawn with bidding at £6000 which, inclusive of all the buildings equates to about £16 an acre. At the same sale

"The Woodrow" Farm with farmhouse, buildings and 82 acres was sold for £1800

Dix's Farm with farmhouse, buildings and 67 acres was sold for £1400 and

Malthouse & Nettleship Farms with a new farmhouse, buildings and 104 acres sold for £2000

These average out at about £20 an acre and from the brochure it appears that Francis Hornor, the land agent who founded the Norwich firm that merged with Brown & Co., may have bid on behalf of clients. I suspect it may have been Clifford **Pye's** father for whom he was acting in respect of Dix's Farm as that is where **Eddie** lives now. We all know these were grim decades for landlords and tenants alike with farming unable to make profits and land prices at rock bottom. Last month I mentioned how **Frederick Hiam** was able to purchase huge acreages in East Anglia before the First World War and there were similar opportunities for tenants, Scotsmen and others amid all the depression and turmoil. I hope we can find out more about such things on Thursday and there are *still places on the coach for Brandon Fields so please contact me.*

Beyond Docking Farm is the Youngs Empire around Sankence and Frogshall. Having mentioned the imminent nuptials of George Youngs and his fiancée Victoria Freeman it occurs to me that neither will be a free man once they are married – sorry.

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