

# HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Richard Brooks

Chairman: Martin Jensen

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

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

## CLUB MATTERS

### Advent 2024

I am returning to Baconsthorpe which Squire Newman left on his winter journey to Sharrington before the snowstorm struck. I referenced *'1066 and All That'* and I suspect that Jane Hales OBE, Holt's local historian, was a fan of that juvenile but charming book. She is the 'go to' source for many of my tall tales and she applies the simplistic 'good' and 'bad' descriptions used by Sellar & Yeatman, the authors of *'1066 etc.'*, in her chapters on Norfolk. In the Squire's eighteenth century she says Edgefield was a "wild, lawless place" - which appears not to have changed much today - as well as a poor (i.e. 'bad') parish where the farmhands had to pick flints in wintertime to survive. By contrast Baconsthorpe was "a model community" where the farmers are described as "all very industrious frugal men and remarkable for their skill in husbandry" while their wives were also notable for their industry and frugality. This may have had something to do with the fact that, although most of the parish was arable, there was a fair amount of dairy farming on this 'good' land and in an earlier century there had been a Christmas gathering of thirty 'master-shepherds' at Baconsthorpe Hall. The Norfolk Horn is one of the oldest British breeds and was widespread throughout East Anglia at that time; they were well suited to the light soils and heathland with their fine fleeces being the staple wool for the worsted industry. However by the nineteenth century heavier breeds like the Suffolk were preferred and the Norfolk Horn suffered a long decline to the extent that they almost went extinct by the 1970s. By back-crossing with related breeds they were saved just in time and, although they remain on the Rare Breeds 'At Risk' list, 2023 saw a 14% rise in numbers. Wildlife Trusts have found them useful for places like Wiveton Downs and Kerry Long (now Gibb) was one of those who kept Norfolk Horns at Cley along with Longhorn cattle. She and her daughter Suzannah, the versatile farm secretary, then switched to Castlemilk Moorit sheep which are smaller and easier to handle with Borerays, another primitive breed from a Scottish island (next to St Kilda), now being their preference.



Norfolk  
Horn Sheep



In medieval times there was a lot of feudal bickering in **Baconsthorpe** and these parts, mainly involving the fractious Paston and Heydon families, culminating in a battle over Gresham Castle in 1448. The uncertain allegiances to Yorkist ('good') and Lancastrian ('bad') causes during the Wars of the Roses, the Roman Catholic Church, the respective monarchs and the monarchy kept things interesting with

**1. John Heydon** acquiring Woodhall, the other Baconsthorpe manor to Squire Newman's, and starting work in 1475 on the fortified farmhouse which became known as Baconsthorpe Castle as well as Salthouse Church. Although he was a lawyer and JP who was buried in the chapel (now lost) that he built at Norwich Cathedral John Heydon was 'bad'. His greed and aggression led him to being called 'a false shrew' and a wifebeater while being likened to Pontius Pilate. As is often the way in families subsequent generations of the Heydon family appear to have alternated between 'good' and 'bad'. John's son

**2. Sir Henry** was also a lawyer and JP but surprisingly 'good'. He finished work on 'the castle' as well as Salthouse Church and also built a pilgrim's causeway between Thursford and Walsingham - perhaps where our Squire was headed beyond the stone cross in Sharrington - while marrying Elizabeth Boleyn, also known as Anne, who was the great aunt of her namesake of 'divorced, beheaded' fame. The Baconsthorpe historian and Holt Member **Richard Youngs** owns the fine farmstead near the roadside pond in The Street which is reckoned to date back to these Tudor times as evidenced by a brick mullioned window. Surprisingly it is not Listed even more so because it incorporates an original oak panelled room (pictured) which has been retained since the still capitated Anne Boleyn took refuge there from a storm. As we know she was born at Blickling and at least there has been some gentrification with the place now being called Pitt Farm. The aforementioned pond or a nearby marlpit probably prompted the name but apparently one of the C T Baker family added the second t while waiting for **Roger Hall's** Upwood Lodge to be built rather than because of a visit from any of Pitt the Elder, Pitt the Younger, Blackadder's Pitt the Embryo or even Pitt the Youngster?



*The casting of Jodie Turner-Smith as Anne Boleyn in a 2021 TV Mini Series sparked accusations of 'blackwashing'*

Meanwhile Sir Henry's son

**3. Sir John II** carried on the construction work including Kelling Church and was knighted by Henry VIII although his youngest brother William was killed by Kett's rebels in 1549. Sir John also built another Heydon Hall at Saxlingham which local solicitor Graeme Peart has restored from a ruin. Sir John's son

**4. Sir Christopher I** died before him so it was his grandson, also

**5. Sir Christopher II** who succeeded 'him. He was really 'good' as a magistrate and MP who, over three decades, became known as 'the Great Housekeeper of Norfolk' for his justice and charity as well as his hospitality since it was he who entertained the master-shepherds. Much of the interior of Baconsthorpe Church commemorates the wealth and power of Sir Christopher and his family. The pendulum then swung under Sir Christopher's son

**6. Sir William Heydon** who, in spite of being a JP and High Sheriff of Norfolk in 1584, lost money to London speculators forcing him to sell much of the Baconsthorpe estate. Things got even 'badder' for his scholarly son

**7. Sir Christopher III** when he rebelled against 'Good' Queen Bess in 1600. He had all his property seized and had to pay £2000 for his release from prison which bankrupted him. In turn they remained 'bad' for his son.

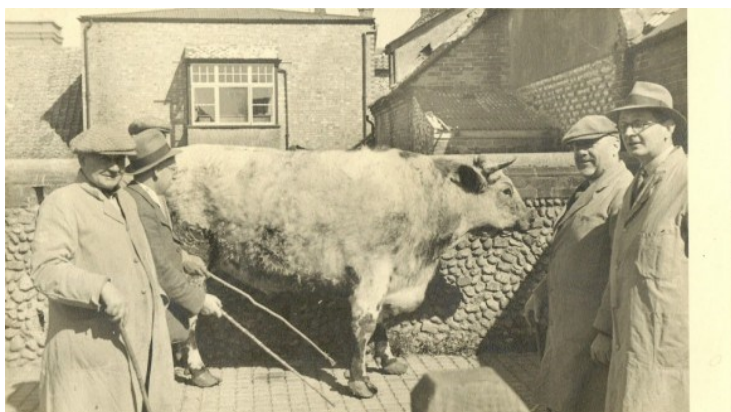


**SEVERED**  
The left hand of Sir John Heydon. cut off in the duel of 1600

**8. Sir William II** who died in 1627 while trying to invade ('good') the French ('bad') Isle of Rhe off Bordeaux. He was succeeded by his brother

**9. Sir John III** for whom the 'bad' luck persisted. At the mere age of 12 (supposedly) John fought a duel with rapier and dagger outside Norwich over money. The poor lad lost his left hand (pictured), severed by Sir Robert Mansfield, which was passed down through several generations and, after being exhibited in Margate in Victorian times, it is now held at Norwich Castle Museum. Young John survived to fight, single handedly I guess, for Charles I in the Civil War. This was a 'bad' move as it led to his estates being sequestered and, although he was able to buy them back, he had to demolish most of 'the castle' so that he could sell the stone to the Felbrigg Estate to raise the funds. John's son

**10. William III** was the last of the line and had to sell what was left of 'the castle'.



Pictured at Holt's Cattle Market behind The Feathers are Richard's grandfather George Youngs with Maurice Sands of Edgefield (L) and Peter Seaman's great grandfather Sidney(R). The latter had rented Pit Farm and the family's move to nearby Castle and Becketts Farm heralded their further acquisitions.

**William Youngs** (of different ilk to **Richard** though also a youngster at heart) has been able to firm up on some of the details for our **Leicester Trip**. First up, mid morning on **Wednesday 4th June** there will be a presentation by the Allerton Project followed by lunch and a walk round this 800 acre demonstration farm. For 30 years this has been where the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust has conducted research into sustainable farming combined with game and landscape management. This is at Loddington on the Leics. / Rutland border and William is looking into a cruise around Rutland Water with late afternoon drinks. Alternatively there could be a visit to Parker Farms at Stamford. We are staying at the 4-star Voco Hotel in Leicester and Strawson Farms are the main event on **Thursday 5th** followed on **Friday 6th** by a tour of Leicester Tigers and then Baileys Trailers before we return that day. Please register early as William needs a good idea of numbers when it comes to bookings: deposits of £260 for a twin room and £330 for a single should be paid into *Holt & District Farmers' Club* account 10554197, sort code 20-03-06. Meanwhile **Colin Ross's** funeral is being held at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, 17th December at Little Snoring Church. Finally for 2024 we have **Dr Antony Caston** from Syngenta via Loddon and Switzerland at **7.30 on Tuesday** when I look forward to seeing you at The Feathers.



Richard Youngs who was born on the farm and has never worked

*Tim*

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