

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Richard Brooks

Chairman: Martin Jensen

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS

April 2025

This fine Spring weather should cheer us but sad losses continue to bedevil us with the death of **David Downing** at 85. David was a true East Anglian having moved up from Suffolk 30 years ago to Kerdiston House Farm near Reepham. He came on trips with us and was a regular at our meetings until relatively recent times. His son Robert farms the land with help from younger brother Ed who is an agronomist with Frontier and a former Aldborough cricketer. I don't believe that **Paddy Downing**, son of John the former Walsingham Estate manager, is related but we welcome him as another land agent at Sworders in addition to **Nick Sandford**; **James Watchorn** has switched ships to Cruso & Wilkin. Last Friday St Andrew's Church in both Holt and Thursford were full of family, friends and memories. Clive Cooper had a tractor (maybe this yellow Massey 65) to take him through Holt and past his home at Pereers Farm to the Cley Road cemetery.



Bryan Plumbly at Thursford had four generations of his family to give him a grand send off with many farmers and Methodists in attendance; he is here pictured in his younger years on his red International. I got to have a few words with the charming Joy Flint, our **Chairman's** mother-in-law, which was a privilege being the first time I have ever conversed with a centenarian. She celebrates the fact that she was amongst the last cohort to get 'a telegram from The Queen' in 2022.



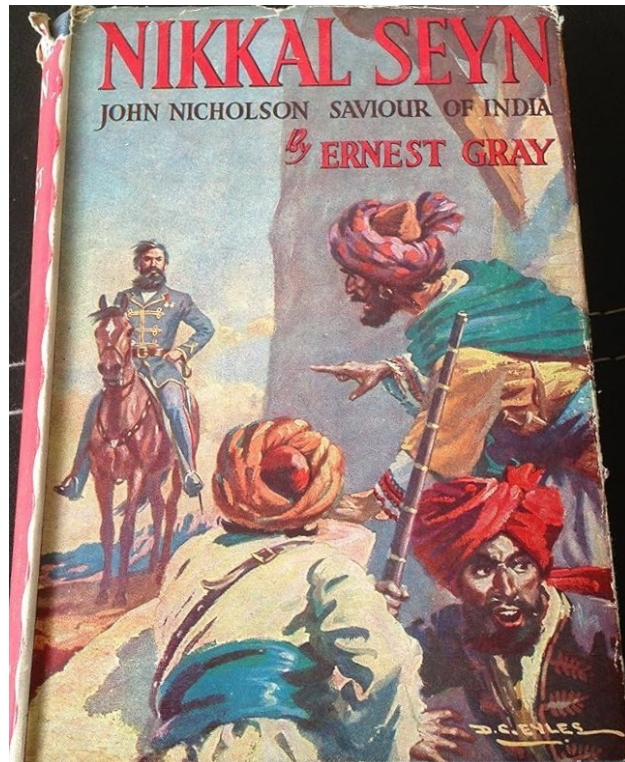
Michael Pollitt's piece is attached on the Stalham Dinner which was fun with **Jonathan Deane, Dan Gotts, Bill Poortvliet, William Youngs** and the irrepressible **Ken Leggett** holding the Holt End up. As the 'ligger' (least important guest) I was deputising for our **President Richard Brooks** who had a clash of diary dates. It was a privilege for me to sit next to Lord Dannatt and join Bill Cubitt on the top table. This is a legendary name for us with **Pat's** late father **Bill** being possibly the seventh or eighth **William Partridge Cubitt** in the family dynasty. Sir William is the former Major General from Honing who has been High Sheriff and President of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association but is not closely related. Apparently the surname Cubitt derives from 'Cuthbert' similar to the way some north-easterners call eider ducks 'cuddy ducks' after St Cuthbert. I mentioned the Cubitt who was executed by the Fighting Bishop Henry le Despenser after the Battle of North Walsham but most of the other Cubitts have prospered beyond their origins in East Norfolk from remote times. There was a branch at Southrepps and another at Catfield Hall while a Cubitt became Mayor of Yarmouth with the Honing estate being acquired in 1683. They extended their holdings around Brunstead, Broomholm and Bacton partly through marriage and reached into Wells-by-the-Sea and Bishop's Lynn as those places were once known. Somewhat curiously when they reached the New World the surname was normally spelt Cupitt. Back in Bacton Pat has updated me on his great great grandfather who looks like a true Victorian with his W,G, beard, Jack Russell dog, riding crop and half hunter watch.



William Partridge Cubitt. Born 29th May 1818 at Bacton; married 14th April, 1852, Marianna youngest daughter of John Prentice of North Walsham, surgeon, she died 20th April, 1918. Farmer, cattle breeder, and coal merchant at Bacton; owner from 1956 of Ebridge flour mill on the river Ant, near North Walsham; and partner with George Walker in the 200 ton schooner Shepherdess, which bought coals from Newcastle to Bacton so. Was sent by Norfolk farmers to Canada to look into the prospects of farming were, and reported adversely. Said it have been the first farmer in Norfolk to give his men 10/- a-week, and to have allowed the use of his barn for first meeting of the Agricultural Labourers Union to be held in the district. Started a school for small children at Bacton, and built four cottages to house at a nominal rent his old employees and other old people of the village. Was a member of the Bacton lifeboat crew, was awarded a medal for riding his horse into the sea and rescuing a drowning man. Died 20th December 1884, buried at Bacton.



He and his son were lifesaving heroes before the RNLI was organised in a story which Pat's mother Mary related on the [Antiques Roadshow in 2018](#). I have tried to attach the episode from Series 41 which I found on the Internet Archive and about a quarter of an hour in. Another William Cubitt from Norfolk, though not necessarily related, was also a Victorian hero who won the V.C. during the Indian Mutiny of 1857. At that time there was a Brigadier General John Nicholson who was another Boy's Own Hero and the living god of a 'Nikel Seyn' cult after dying a brutal but glorious death in the Siege - and recapture - of Delhi.



Today, rather than "probably the finest frontline battlefield commander in the Victorian British Empire" he is considered a sadistic bully, psychopath and racist. I should add he is no ancestor of mine but there can be a fine line between saints and sinners. In the early nineteenth century another Sir William Cubitt was lauded for his invention of the treadmill "as a means of usefully employing convicts" whereas today it would attract the same opprobrium that my Nicholson namesake does.

Tim

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Holt's night of success at Stalham's annual dinner

It was Holt's night of success as the supreme inter-club barley championship was presented by the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, the Lady Dannatt.

The certificate for the best sample of Laureate, grown by Andrew Ross, of Houghton St Giles, was received on his behalf by Martin Jensen, chairman of Holt & District Farmers' Club.

The reserve supreme champion sample was grown by the president of Stalham Farmers' Club, George Gay, of Mautby Farms.

Earlier Jon Pye, chairman of Stalham Farmers' Club, had welcomed more than 120 members and guests to the annual dinner at Salhouse Lodge. Mr Jensen and Tim Nicholson, the long-serving secretary to Holt Farmers, were on the top table with the Lady Dannatt and her husband, General the Lord Dannatt.

Lady Dannatt said that Norfolk was at the forefront of the country's agricultural revolution and today farmers, scientists and researchers continue that tradition of innovation.

As Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk since August 2019 and the current president of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association, she spoke of her enormous pride in the county's achievements.

"The agricultural revolution began here in Norfolk. The Norwich Research Park is continuing that remarkable tradition and how.

"But it is you, the very cream of our county, our extraordinary farming and agricultural community who are yet again having to learn to adapt and live with substantial change, leaning into the challenges of the future.

"It is you the farmers who plant the seeds and ensure their growth thus creating a brighter and more sustainable future for us all. Farming is about nurturing the crop and the prospects for future generations," said Lady Dannatt.

On behalf of His Majesty the King, may I thank each and every one of you for the service you give and the sacrifices you undoubtedly make on a regular basis. Norfolk owes you all a profound debt of gratitude, indeed. Thank you.

Michael Pollitt



Pictures: Simon Finlay Photography.