

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

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www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS

May and VE Days 2025

This is a quick update on Holt's now not so unknown soldier Clifford Knights. **Mark Cook**, native of Holt, and Sue Page have gone onto t'internet more successfully than that other M & S team. The 1939 census confirms that Clifford was a 'Baker's Roundsman' living at the Norwich Road home of Walter Knights who, by occupation, was a 'Commission Agent (Turf)' - in other words a bookie. He had been born on 23rd November 1922 so was then 16 and died before the war had ended when only 22 years and 5 months. He had an older sister Queenie and his mother Florence (maiden name Allison) performed 'Unpaid Domestic Duties'. Herewith are some photos from that period showing the Carpenters Arms and I would like it to be true that the standing figure could have been Clifford since he appears to be wearing britches with gaiters and could be holding a basket of buns and/or pastries. Either side of him are two young girls possibly playing peekaboo while Mrs Gant or Jenkinson keeps an eye out from the pub door and the little dog keeps guard against the photographer. This section of Norwich Road could have been quiet enough for children to play in since the A148 passed across Obelisk (named after a mileage monument from Melton Constable Park) Plain in front of Kings & Barnhams with Blind Sam (named after a Jubilee Lantern that often went out as it was powered by the town's gas works) and drinking fountains - through the High Street cum Market Place and on to Cromer. In the 1970s the ancient flint cottages opposite were demolished to widen the Norwich Road at the start of the B1149 with Howard's Dairy depot also being cleared along with Holt's iconic pound. There are various versions of how Holt took the crepuscular owl as its emblem and none of them are in any way flattering. Traditionally stray animals had been kept in the pound between these cottages and the Methodist Church. There was a tree on the Gresham's playing field alongside Station Road opposite where the police station used to be. Allegedly this owl was in the habit of swooping down on the helmets of the local bobbies and other behatted passers-by so two boys managed to capture it and, after placing it in the pound (or was it up a drainpipe ?), were surprised when it immediately flew up and away - presumably back to its roost.



Carpenters Arms

After the war there was a G. Knights bakery on Fish Hill just off Holt Market Place which is now Eric's Pizza and there may be a family connection there. On 7th August 1940, in the middle of The Battle of Britain, Prime Minister Winston Churchill was on a tour of the east coast defences and inspected a Royal Artillery regiment using heavy guns at Gresham's School. He later visited the supposedly secret Carvel Farm Camp at Weybourne (now The Muckleburgh Collection) where there was a Light Anti-Aircraft Artillery range but he decided to make a return visit after a demonstration of projectile firing ended with the VIP enclosure almost being taken out. Some of this may have been what led to Clifford enlisting with Battery 372 of the 114th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment and he was perhaps fortunate in that a similar regiment was later deployed to assist the Americans relieve the Belsen concentration camp on 18th April 1945. Some of you may have heard Eva Clarke who was born in Mauthausen concentration camp on 29th April 1945 weighing just three pounds while her mother weighed five stone. The reasons why they both survived are that the Nazis ran out of gas for the showers on 28th April and the Americans reached the camp on 5th May - VE Day itself.

Last orders were served at the Carpenters Arms, which had been the "favourite watering hole of the gas boys" who worked at the top of Letheringsett Hill, in 1968. Subsequently it was somewhat neglected but it has now been fully refurbished and is now on the market as an upmarket home with an asking price of £895,000. To the south was Crowe's Cars and Taxis which became Yetmans Restaurant in the 1990s and now continues in the same vein as meadowsweet - an alternative to Byford's for Holt's 'poshos'. The road outside was relisted as the A148 once the Holt bypass was opened along the old railway line in the 1990s and the B1149 now starts beyond the roundabout and outside the 'new' police station which was being offered for housing since 2020 but is still standing despite being marked 'sold' last year,. Where, I ask, will we now be able to take our errant owls?



Norwich Road

A correction now arrives from **Chris Harrold**, a veteran of wind and solar schemes around Bluestone 'drome, who points out that I mistakenly referred to the Orsted Hornsea 3 scheme, that is currently nearing completion, as having been constructed by Equinor rather than Volker Fitzpatrick. Equinor received approval last year for their Sheringham Shoal (SEP) and Dudgeon Extension Projects (DEP) with their intention to double the capacity of the existing windfarms and power nearly 1.5 million households. There are environmental objectors and the final Development Consent Order decision is due later this year.

Tom

Winston Churchill inspecting a 9.2 inch gun of the 57th Heavy Artillery at Gresham's School in Holt during a tour of east coast defences on 7th August 1940



An Anti-Aircraft gun employed at Weybourne Camp

ATS women operate a rangefinder at Weybourne Camp on 23rd October 1941 in front of mobile 3.7 inch AA gun



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