

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Richard Brooks

Chairman: Martin Jensen

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

75th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING **7.30p.m. on Tuesday, 14th October 2025 at** **The Feathers Hotel, 6 Market Place, Holt, NR25 6BW**

It has been a difficult 12 months for most of us with indecision and drought in the agricultural sector combined with political discord and economic struggle on the national and international fronts. Nevertheless our club has, under **Martin Jensen's** steady stewardship, had a successful year and there are reasons for optimism. We intend to build on the recruitment of younger members from our trip to Leicestershire and a couple of changes are to be confirmed at our upcoming AGM which make way for the next generation. Chief among these is **Richard Brooks's** decision to stand down as our President after four years. Ever the gentleman, Richard has been a great servant who prompted and then ran our early Student Days and then brought his experience as Master of The Worshipful Company of Farmers in 2000/1 to find us venues for many of our best trips. He will now have more time for Hazel and his lovely two black Labs. Of similar age to Richard is the venerable **John Cragg** who notified us last year that he intends to spend even more time on the golf course. His great contribution has been our Malting Barley Competition which has run successfully since 1995. As a partner in grain merchants Adams & Howling he was previously well known to many members and his former colleague **Chris Borrett** has continued his good work. Latterly, having seen our struggles through the Covid period, John generously volunteered to join our committee where he has made recruitment of new members the priority. This leaves at least one vacancy and it is gratifying that **Shane Barnes** has confirmed that he is willing to stand. Shane spoke to us at last year's AGM when he was with Oxbury Bank having spent most of his career with Barclays and is now pursuing his own business interests including private banking.



Incoming President: Peter Perry-Warnes



Outgoing President: Richard Brooks

Accordingly this AGM, to be held a week on Tuesday, will be a significant one and you are hereby formally invited to our **75th Annual General Meeting at The Feathers Hotel in Holt starting at 7.30 p.m. on 14th October**. Following on from the President's resignation the committee has consulted relevant parties and, after due deliberation, **Peter Perry-Warnes** is prepared to accept the role. He was initially co-opted onto the committee in 2007 becoming Chairman from 2013 to 2016 and then speaking on behalf of the Club at our 75th Anniversary Dinner eighteen months ago. His farming operation has expanded hugely over this time so that his acreage now rivals that of some of Norfolk's great estates and Peter's genial manner make him eminently suited to become our sixth President. Because of Covid there was no re-appointment of committee members in 2020 and thereby four members **Martin Jensen, Stuart Ross, Jimmy Fowell** and **William Youngs** are up for re-election this year. I'm happy to say that all are ready to stand again

along with Shane Barnes who has also been formally proposed. One or two on the existing committee have had health problems over recent years and would not wish to stand in the way of any member who would like to volunteer as Shane has done. You merely need to get another member to nominate you and to let me have the Nomination Paper at the bottom of the agenda before the day of the meeting.



The excitement will be in seeing who, if anyone, can wrest the silverware for the Malting Barley Competition away from Vice Chairman **Andrew Ross** who made a clean sweep last year. His cousin **Stuart** has now retired from the family business although he has assumed his late father Ian's role as Collector-in-Chief. Apparently there has been a good entry in spite of the drought and we are fortunate to have Rebecca Gee from Crisp Malt back again as judge and to report on the results as well as the state of the grain trade. Thanks are due to Adams & Howling and I note that Chris Borrett has now been master of ceremonies for even more years than his mentor Mr Cragg.

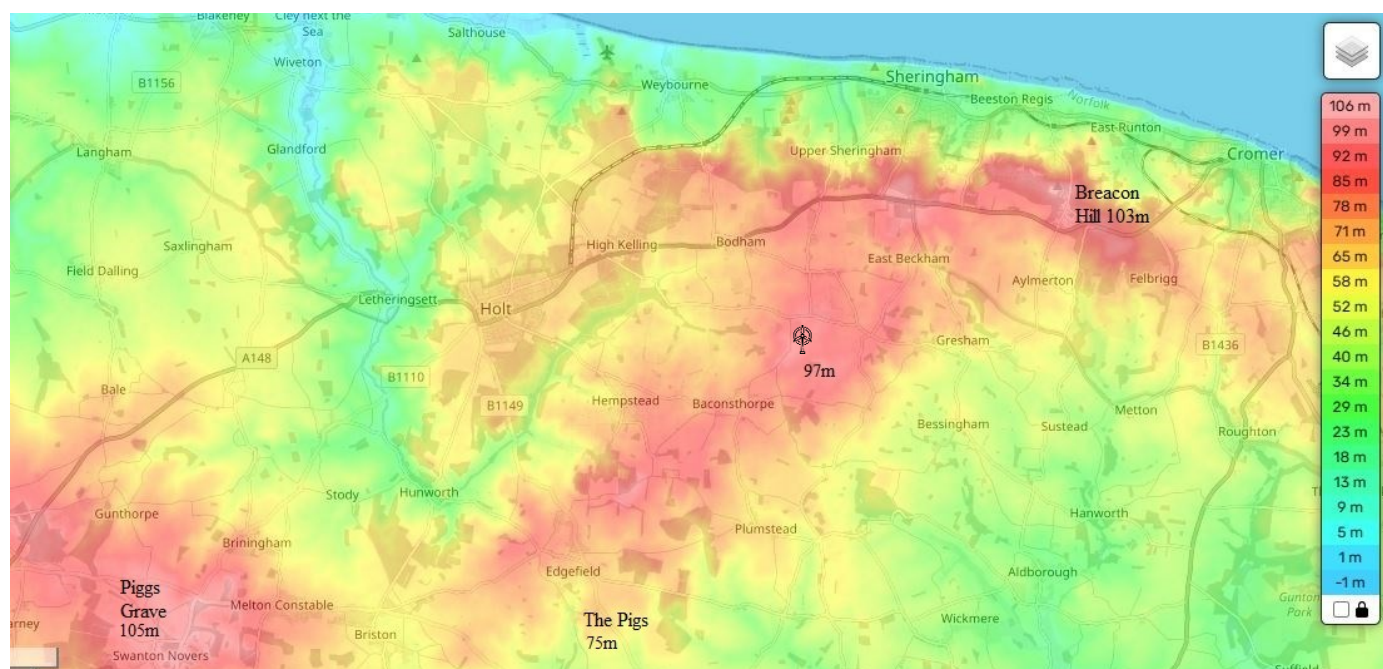


The other highlight is a presentation by **Dr Darren Heavens** who is Senior Postdoctoral Research Scientist at the Earlham Institute. Previously he was Operations Manager for the John Innes Genome Laboratory and now he advances research towards an automated sample to sequence crop pathogen detection solution. This may sound rather niche but don't be put off. The doctor comes on the recommendations of both the Chairman and Secretary of Stalham Farmers with the alternative title of "**Is there Something in the Air ?**". He has covered multiple spheres including cancer research, pig breeding, wheat varieties, crop diseases and more. There have been huge advances in the detective techniques accompanied by large savings in costs with small monitoring devices - even hand-held ones for airborne diseases. Things are then looking good for the forthcoming season with **Tim Papworth on 11th November, Janet Sorley**, Project Director at Murphys for the Norfolk Offshore Wind Zone on **9th December** and **Mark Nicholas**, Managing Director of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association on **13th January**. It is hoped we can provide something for everyone, especially younger members whom we are looking to invite to the meals beforehand to encourage involvement.

Michael Pollitt, wearing one of his many hats, is the Honorary Archivist for the RNAA, and he provided a lovely reflection on the life of David Richardson who died in August aged 87. This was on Last Word, the Radio 4 obituary programme, which is available on BBC Sounds at <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002hmr4> He was probably Norfolk's most famous farmer of the post war era through his prominent part in so many places like the BBC, Farmers Weekly, LEAF, the Financial Times and Open Farm Sundays; Michael was right to confirm that his contribution was legendary. I once invited him to come and speak to us but the nearest I got was when a quiz against his Mardlers was mooted and that didn't happen either. I remember him saying he was too old but he lived for another twenty years so I guess the reason was he had too many calls on his time.



Talking of quizzes I made an attempt to revive the successes that **Richard Youngs**, **Mark Cook** and **Peter Pointen** had representing our club in the Norfolk Livestock Clubs' annual quiz pre Covid. With our Chaman standing in for the unavailable **Pat Cubitt** we named ourselves Ridgemen North of Reepham. This is my version of the Appalachian Anthem of a couple of years ago when the redneck (and red bearded) Oliver Anthony bemoaned how the rural poor suffer on account of the Rich Men North of Richmond which is a euphemism for the elite or 'the man' living in Washington D.C. I often refer to the Cromer Ridge in my newsletters since it is the principal geographical feature in our district and one can read spot heights on a coloured map at www.topographic-map.com. With the Glaven and Stiffkey river catchment areas to the north and the Wensum and Bure ones to the south, this watershed extends over about 15 miles from Thursford (around 65 metres above sea level) to Norfolk's highest point at Beacon Hill (c. 103 m) between Aylmerton and West Runton. Reepham lies at c. 40 m and, while our Guestwick guru Martin is only at c. 62 m, he is certainly north of that town. Mark and Peter both live in Edgefield, Peter in Ramsgate Street (c. 67 m) and Mark near, appropriately, The Pigs (c. 75 m). My home, in what I grandiloquently refer to as Upper Bodham between Bodham Street and West Beckham, is at c. 80 m. while Richard of Baconsthorpe tops the scale at c. 83 m and his imminent birthday will bring him close to that number. The solitary Mack turbine half way between our homes is given as being at 97 m which, with a hub height of 40 m and blade tip height of 66 m, puts the overall height at 163 m.



We were unable to scale the heights last week in a quiz at Holt Rugby Club to raise funds for the Holt Youth Project. **Stuart Ross**, another of our old team, was organizing the event so he had raised his own team with his wife Liz but they both did a grand job for this excellent cause. We might have done better if we had inveigled **Jonathan Seaman** away from another team but his farm near the Bure is only at c. 27 m making him a Rich Man South of Richard Ellis (the new owner of Wolterton and Mannington Halls). However this interactive map may not be totally accurate since it re-opens the old issue of where Norfolk's highest point might be. The trig point at Pigg's Grave on Gallowhill Lane south-west of the B1110 Holt / Dereham and B1354 Thursford / Aylsham crossroads has a reading of 102 m comparing with 103 m for the one at Beacon Hill as aforementioned. However due east from Pigg's Grave on the east side of the B1110 and over the boundary wall one gets a reading of 105 m in the skirting woodland known as The Forest. The mystery deepens....or heightens ?

Tim

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