

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Peter Perry-Warnes

Chairman: Martin Jensen

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS

January 2026

There was an interesting juxtaposition last Tuesday when Mark Nicholas, Managing Director of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association, was addressing the club. Seated in the front row was **Ken Leggett** whose whole career has been devoted to Norfolk agriculture and farmers. He was the last NFU Secretary to cover the whole of Norfolk, secretary to the Norfolk Farmers' Trust, a Stalham member for 60 years and instigator of our Student Days. Ken has also been devoted to his Old Catton ward as a Broadland councillor and still serves on their planning committee as I related last month. Incidentally there was a typo when I said that the decision he clinched on the solar farm was likely to be 'refused' on appeal - I should have said 'reversed', i.e. approved. **Michael Pollitt**, Ken's good friend and near neighbour, has reported on the excellent work Mark Nicholas is doing at the RNAA and this was a meeting of M.B.E.s with, in a way, Mark following in Ken's Park Run footsteps. Ken is 95 on Tuesday and we wish him many happy returns.



Two other nonagenarians in our club worthy of mention are **John McNeil Wilson**, still driving in his mid 90s, and **Roger Hall**, not far behind in terms of years nor in terms of distance apart being two kilometres due south on the other side of the Cromer Ridge beyond the Mack turbine. Another person soon to turn 95 is my stepmother Margaret. A year ago I reported on the tragic-comic events at Wortham Manor Farm near Diss in 1934 as a key point in the Tithe War. Margaret was at Malvern Girls' School and then Somerville College, Oxford where she befriended Stella Rash who was the daughter of the formidable Doreen Wallace, the unlikely heroine of that rural revolt. Sadly Margaret has suffered from Alzheimers for several years which typically means that she may not know the time of day but can still converse sensibly on things from her distant past. It would have been around 1950 when she was invited by Stella to the Waveney valley farm where she had a fun time despite finding Rowland Rash, Stella's father and a churchwarden, rather austere.

Her mother was Mrs Dora Rash, Doreen Wallace being her pen name for more than thirty novels and the guide books that she wrote on her native Lake District, East Anglia and Norfolk (with Dick Bagnall-Oakley). She remained active as a campaigner and artist, amongst much else, and lived to be 92. Doreen and Rowland's grandson Stephen still runs the farm with his son Tom and is a strong NFU man running arable and beef

operations. Stella became an artist but I'm sure the gentleman sketched here isn't her father and the female nude probably isn't her sister Laura who farmed in Arizona before returning to Diss. Stephen is now nearly 70 and, like Albanwise at Pettywell near Reepham, has incorporated some of his land into a solar farm to compensate for the poor returns from arable and beef farming as well as finance improvements. Then there is Dick van Dyke who reached 100 before Christmas as an example to us all and encouragement to sing from the rooftops.



Shane Barnes, our new committee member, has started well by securing **Professor Brian Reid**, a soil scientist from UEA, as our next speaker on Tuesday, 10th February. He covers all aspects such as carbon, contamination, agrochemicals and sustainability while having won teaching awards so he will be well worth hearing. Then on **Tuesday, 10th March** we have **Felix Gedney** who comes from a farming background before serving 38 years in the British Army rising to the rank of Major General and earning an OBE. Meanwhile President Peter is still working on his itinerary around **North Yorkshire** so I suggest you keep your diaries clear for the first week in June.



Professor Brian Reid



ex Major General Felix Gedney

Hon. Secretary: T. P. S. Nicholson 6 Great Yard The Street, Saxthorpe Norwich NR117AH 07464 991741
tim_nicholson@ymail.com

Hon. Treasurer: L. A. J. P. Hill Summerhill House 1 Sculthorpe Road Fakenham NR21 9HA 07811 034215
laurie.hill@larking-gowen.co.uk