

# HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

*President:* Peter Perry-Warnes

*Chairman:* Martin Jensen

*Vice-Chairman:* Andrew Ross

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

## CLUB MATTERS FEBRUARY 2026

When getting our Club's Honours Board updated to include **Peter Perry-Warnes** as our sixth President I note that we now have a double-barrelled name again following on from our inaugural one of Sir Charles Mott- Radclyffe from 1948. Sir Charles was born on Christmas Day 1911 as Charles Henry Radclyffe son of Lt. Col. Charles Edward Radclyffe who was lost, literally, in the Battle of Loos. This was the largest British attack of 1915 where twelve battalions suffered 8,000 casualties out of 10,000 men in 4 hours. In Edwardian times the Lt. Col. had married Theresa Mott whose family had owned the Barningham Estate since the early nineteenth century when Humphry Repton redesigned the house and grounds. She tried in vain to find his body and there is a remarkable reredos (pictured) in the tiny St. Mary's Church in Barningham Park dedicated to his memory; this is the delightful place that the late lamented Sara Buxton tended so diligently. Charles Junior went to Eton where he was a contemporary of William Douglas Home, the younger brother of the future Prime Minister Alec who became Lord Dunglass in 1951. Etonians were then fortunate enough to be coached by George Hirst who was a teammate of Wilfred Rhodes, the even greater Yorkshire and England all rounder who coached at Harrow. It was these two who agreed to "get 'em in singles" and indeed they did get the necessary 15 runs for the last wicket to beat the Australians at The Oval in 1902. Alec is the only British Prime Minister to have played first class cricket with ten games in the 1920s for Middlesex, Oxford University and others. In 1927 Charles adopted the Mott surname by deed poll before going on to Balliol College, Oxford where he showed an interest in politics, and then the Diplomatic Corps. He married Diana Gibbs in 1940 and they had three daughters one of whom, Theresa married into the Courtauld family and it is her son Thomas who now owns Barningham Hall with his wife Amelia and children.



Charles started the war as an unpaid attache to the British ambassadors in Athens and Rome before joining his father's old regiment, the Rifle Brigade. He was a liaison officer in Greece from where he made a narrow escape in a tiny boat. He was also posted to Damascus and saw action in Egypt and the grim battle for Italy. However it was felt by mid 1942 that the Allies' war fortunes were turning and, now a captain, Charles was selected as Tory candidate for a by election at Windsor. A wartime truce had been called between Labour and

Conservatives that they would not contest such elections but the aforementioned William Douglas Home stood against him as an Independent Progressive. William was a bit of a maverick in that he was opposed to the coalition government's commitment to total victory. Mindful of how the Treaty of Versailles could be seen as having prompted the rise of Hitler by being too punitive William was in favour of a negotiated peace to avoid further attrition. To some this smacked of appeasement and this suspicion was no doubt strengthened by the fact that his elder brother Alec had been Neville Chamberlain's parliamentary private secretary during the abortive Munich episode in 1938. Charles, by contrast, was very much the continuity candidate as part of the landed gentry succeeding another Tory grandee as well as being an army officer and a strong supporter of Churchill. The poll was surprisingly close with Charles getting 58% to secure his seat for the next 28 years while William became better known as a playwright who wrote "Lloyd George knew my father". Alec was to lose his seat in the Labour landslide of 1945 and his brief term as Prime Minister was in 1963/4 when he abolished retail price maintenance; he also served two terms as Foreign Secretary.

Back in Norfolk in 1940 Charles placed Baconsthorpe Castle into the hands of the Ministry of Public Works while at the same time RAF Matlaske was being created as a satellite airfield to Coltishall. It was hastily built with grass tracks causing severe drainage problems throughout its operational life. Accommodation was also erected in Barningham Park with the officers taking over the hall itself which they described as 'charming'; Italian prisoners of war were encamped here at the end of the war – but not I trust in the hall. After the war Charles used his experience in the Middle East and North Africa as Chairman of the Conservative back bench Foreign Affairs Committee and he had met Nasser, the Egyptian leader, before the Suez Crisis in 1956. This earned him his knighthood and he became a High Sheriff of Norfolk and a Deputy Lieutenant. Although he could be termed a rightwinger (he was sympathetic to Ian Smith declaration of independence in Rhodesia) he resigned from the board of Norwich Union after Arab financial interests forced out the chairman Lord Mancroft who was Jewish.

Alec Douglas Home  
at The Oval in 1961  
with Sir Charles



#### WINDSOR DIVISION BY-ELECTION

THE PRIME MINISTER  
asks you to VOTE for



CAPT. C. E.

**MOTT-RADCLYFFE**  
THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT CANDIDATE.  
POLLING DAY—30th JUNE, 1942.

Understandably he supported the preservation of historical buildings and as our President he offered sites around the Barningham estate for our annual ploughing matches. He was also a keen cricket supporter and Stella, his second wife, was a parish councillor who was an ally of farmers as Brian Last has stated from when he was Chairman at Saxthorpe & Corpusty. Ted Slapp, a tenant on the estate near Wickmere church, was able to build a house close to his Pear Tree Farmstead through her pulling a few strings. Walter Callaby was Ted's friend and near neighbour and they both served our club loyally for many years on the committee while paying



special attention to the ploughing matches. I attach an extract from a recent and intriguing history of Matlaske written in three volumes by author and local historian Duncan Wood. He is the local churchwarden and a Cambridge graduate who has kindly allowed me to use this. Gap Farm is on the south side of the village street that forms the greater part of this small village and people refer to the neighbouring area as Matlaske Gap. My thinking is that this is a geographical term that refers to the route that travellers would have taken from Aylsham to Holt and/or Sheringham in pre-industrial centuries as the easiest way to traverse the Cromer Ridge. Apparently there is a 'hollow way' to the north-east of the current village which may have been formed when traffic was able to pass close to the hall until it was diverted to keep the riffraff away.



Matlaske June 1946

Matlask or Matlaske? There are several villages - Salle, Hindolveston and Fulmodeston to name but three- where it has long been uncertain about the spelling. The compromise at Matlask/e and often elsewhere has been to avoid the 'e' for the village and add it for the parish. We had a similar problem in Yorkshire on the death of a Dales farmer's devout wife. The inscription he chose for the headstone was "Here lieth thy faithful servant Ena. She was thine". When it was delivered, he was disappointed to find that the 'e' had been missed off. Imagine then his reaction the next time when it read "E, she was Thin". Maybe this offers an insight into dealing with the natives on Peter's planned trip to **The Pennines** which should be **from Tuesday 2nd to Thursday 4th June**. Imminently we have **UEA Soil Scientist Professor Brian Reid on Tuesday, 10th February** followed by **former Brigadier General Felix Gedney on Tuesday, 10th March., 7.30 at The Feathers** for both.



Hon. Secretary: T. P. S. Nicholson    6 Great Yard    The Street,   Saxthorpe   Norwich NR117AH 07464 991741  
[tim\\_nicholson@ymail.com](mailto: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](mailto:laurie.hill@larking-gowen.co.uk)



# **Mary and Walter Callaby**

## **in the Matlaske of the 1930s**

**extracted from Matlaske History Vol.3**

**Published 2021 by Duncan Wood M.A.**

I found the following document in a box of files about St Peter's, Matlaske, which I inherited as a churchwarden from the late David Wooff, former treasurer, fabric officer and chairman of the parochial church council. It seems to be the text of a speech given when Walter and Mary Callaby left Matlaske and went to live in High Kelling in 1998.

By way of introduction, Water Callaby was born in Bessingham in 1923 and moved to Gap Farm with his parents in 1935. During the Second World War he was a member of the Matlaske Section of the Home Guard. In 1948 he married Mary E Smith of Baconsthorpe, and shortly afterwards took over the tenancy of Gap Farm himself. He retired in 1998, moved to Kelling, and passed away in 2013. An index of his popularity is that 320 people attended his Thanksgiving Service in Baconsthorpe Church. Mary passed away in 2019 and her funeral took place in Barningham Winter church.

When Mary and Walter Callaby moved from Matlaske to High Kelling at Michaelmas it marked the end of a long association with the village. Walter Callaby moved into Gap Farm with his parents and two brothers in Michaelmas 1935. Walter was twelve years old and spent the following two years at the village school before starting work on the farm. Walter and Mary have spent all their lives in and around Matlaske. Walter was born at Bessingham and Mary in Baconsthorpe.



The Matlaske Gap?

Life in Matlaske in the 1930s must sound to the present generation like something out of a history book. No electricity in the village until 1936; no running water until 1937. Up until that date water came from three wells spread out along the village street. Whilst water on tap and electricity on switch are thought to be modern indispensables other essential services, which were commonplace then, have since disappeared; namely the village shop, the village school and the post office. Gone also are the pre-war football team, cricket team and bowls team. No more evening relaxation on the bench under the oak tree outside Jellicoe Riseborough's discussing the day's events and sharing a good yarn.

Listening to Walter and Mary talking about village life one is reminded of a community of people who worked locally and worked on the land. At the farm there were five farm workers, now there is only one. Until 1960 there was a team of shire horses, now two tractors. There were three separate classes at Matlaske school during Walter's day and over a hundred pupils at Baconsthorpe school where Mary attended. Now no local schools at all.

It was during the war that Walter and Mary saw the population increase by over 2,000 with the arrival of the ground and air crew at the airfield at the back of Gap Farm. Mary worked at the village shop during the war and remembers the village shop hiring out bicycles to RAF personnel and also hand cranking the shop's petrol pump in order to fill jerry cans with petrol for prisoner of war lorries.

Helping run the farm and bringing up four children Mary describes as a full-time job. Before she was married Mary worked as a cashier in Lerner's grocery department and cycled into Holt from Baconsthorpe every day. Delays at the level crossing gates (near Thaxter's yard on the present by-pass) she recalls, were not considered to be a good excuse for being late for work!

For forty years Walter Callaby was on the committee of the Holt and District Farmers' Club and a long-standing Adviser and Consultant to the ground crew of the Matlaske Church Fete Tent Raising Committee. Another Callaby expertise has been Mary's gift for flower arranging - much appreciated by the congregation of St Peter's Matlaske, especially at Harvest Festival. An excellent example of Methodist / Anglican co-operation.

Farming by its very nature has to do with the constantly shifting elements of weather and seasons and also with the more stable elements of landscape and human need. Out of this interaction between the constantly changing and the unchanging have sprung village and farming communities. Mary and Walter Ware part of this. rural scene for over 50 years. Their lives left a lasting impression on the hearts and minds of people in Matlaske, and it remains an important question as to whether the gap left at Gap Farm can be, or ever will be, filled.