

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Peter Perry-Warnes

Chairman: Martin Jensen

Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

POLLITT'S PIECE March 2026

General Briefs members on Importance of Defence & Food Security

One of the highest ranking military officers ever to address Holt & District Farmers' Club spoke to a large gathering of members. A farmer's son, Maj Gen Felix Gedney, took the Queen's shilling and has served 38 years in the Army. Although he had served in many theatres including Iraq and Afghanistan, he said that he was more nervous standing before an audience of Holt farmers! In a wide-ranging presentation to about 35 members at the Feathers, Holt, he suggested that there were many similarities between farming and the Army. For example, both involved close quarters teamwork and a determination to get things done, regardless of weather and other challenges. Both were reliant on specialist, often heavy-duty machinery, and increasingly mastery of technology. As a tank commander in Germany,



everyone in the four-man crew has to muck into together. "And if tank tracks have to be straightened, there's no standing on ceremony," he said. Mr Gedney, who said that he had moved 19 times during his career and played for 15 different rugby clubs, now looked on his adopted county of Norfolk as his home and the bedrock of his life. He was brought up on a 300-acre farm in Kent, mainly arable but with a significant acreage of top fruit and learned to appreciate the demands of working in all weathers. While his brother had gone to agricultural college, he joined the Army and soon given the opportunity to gain a commission and graduated from the Royal Military Academy. He joined the infantry and had several postings with the Royal Green Jackets in Northern Ireland. Here, his farming background also stood him in good stead, especially patrolling in rural areas of Tyrone and Fermanagh. He rose steadily through the Army and as Lieutenant Colonel of the Royal Scots Dragon Guards was made OBE in the 2007 New Year's Honours. In 2011, Brig Gedney was in the United States for further training ahead of deployment to the east of Afghanistan with the Afghan National Security Forces. Between 2011 and 2013, he was deputy commander of the 1st Infantry Division. In 2017, he was deputy commanding general of Combined Joint Task Force with Operation Inherent Resolve to defeat ISIS in Syria and Iraq. He held a number of high-level posts including as the UK chief of defence staff's liaison officer in Washington and was also at the United Nations in New York. He served a 12-month tour as deputy commander of regional command east in Afghanistan.

In May 2017, he was promoted Major General and was acting commander of the Army's Home Command during the COVID-19 crisis. He also emphasised the importance of security for Britain - not just in terms of the defence spending

but also highlighted the economic threats. For example, his father, a grower of quality English apples, would have been horrified that just 16pc of UK apples were home-grown. And, domestic food security, was also vital too in an increasingly uncertain world. He also expressed concern too that often too many bureaucratic obstacles discouraged young men and women from joining the Forces. Several members spoke of the lengthy delays for potential recruits, which was often discouraged young people from an exciting and stimulating career. A lengthy question and answer session followed and the chairman Martin Jensen then asked Andrew Ross, who had known Maj Gen Gedney for a quarter of a century, to give a vote of thanks.

Michael Pollitt

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RAISING AWARENESS OF VETERAN HOMELESSNESS

Empowering Our Bravest

Royal British Veterans Enterprise (RBVE) is a national charity with over a century of proud service, helping thousands of ex-servicemen and women rebuild their lives. We empower veterans and people with disabilities by creating meaningful jobs, providing quality homes, and building inclusive communities where everyone can thrive.

Many thanks for providing the best turnout of the season. Apologies...when advertising the Major General's talk I cryptically referred to him having "ended up on the street". This was in reference to The Great Tommy Sleep Out which is an annual charity event that has been running since 2020. Last year Felix spent a cold night in the shop doorway of Morston Sports on Shirehall Plain close to Byfords in Holt. If you are interested in donating you can use the website <https://rbve.org.uk/events/the-great-tommy-sleep-out/> or Felix was using the Linked In address <https://lnkd.in/dPCirUuw>



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