

HOLT & DISTRICT FARMERS' CLUB

FOUNDED 1948

President: Peter Perry-Warnes

Chairman: Martin Jensen

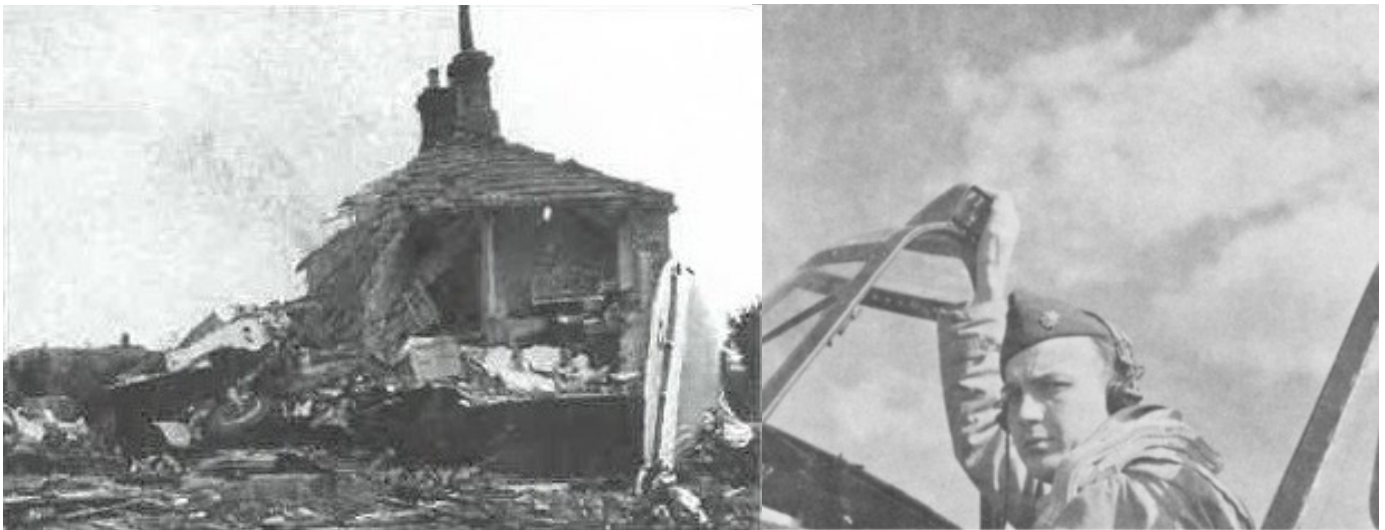
Vice-Chairman: Andrew Ross

www.holtfarmers.club

CLUB MATTERS

April 2026

Pereers, Holt's most infamous name, is back in the news with a proposal for 49 new homes to be built on the north side of the town just beyond where Pereers Farmhouse once stood. A field of about 5 acres that has been part of the Letheringsett Estate lies on the west side of the Cley Road opposite where Norfolk Homes are removing 4 old poultry houses. This is about half way between where Winn's Nurseries once operated (now Town Close) and the town cemetery which was established in 1909. Vol. 2 of John Roebuck's Illustrated History of Holt (2015) gives a good account (attached) of the drama on 24th August, 1944 when a USAAF Liberator bomber demolished half of the farmhouse from where 4 year old Mary Empson and her cousin, but not the pullets they were feeding in the adjacent pig sty, narrowly escaped. Young Mary was to marry Edwin **Jones** and their son **Ben** and grandson **Kees** now live beyond the cemetery. Clive Cooper's widow Veronica (nee Duffield) lives in the bungalow that replaced the farmhouse and the town has expanded, mainly with bungalows, as far as a caravan site at the rear. Most of the field falls within the Norfolk Coast National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) although this designation has done little to restrict Norfolk Homes on the opposite side of Cley Road. Neither site is zoned for development in the new Local Plan but the Pereers one is similar to the one near Holt Methodist Church which the slow worm was unable to preserve from development in February.



In August 1944 an American bomber, returning damaged from a raid into Germany, crashed into Pereers Farm.

The farmhouse was demolished but luckily the family were away that day. Pilot Major Joseph O. Garrett The Holt historian states that the bomber pilot was the sole survivor but that is not the half of it. Also attached is a letter from Pilot Major Joe O. Garrett written a quarter of a century after that fateful August day in wartime. He was stationed at Mendlesham in Mid Suffolk and had led previous successful raids on strategic enemy targets across northern Europe. Kiel, Germany's naval base on the Baltic, and the airfield at Hemmingstedt were stoutly defended by anti-aircraft installations along the west coast of Schleswig-Holstein extending to the ovary-shaped Sylt island off the border between Germany and Denmark. It was these defences which hit Major Garrett's plane and when he was told that there was minimal fuel left he ordered all nine of his crew to bail out. Bravely he set course to cover 400 miles or more back to East Anglia. In an extraordinary feat of airmanship, struggling first with his parachute and then with the controls, he managed to keep the plane airborne for two hours until he saw the cliffs, he claims, of Dover. With the faulty gauges and controls he was about 150 miles astray since, from the on land account of Ian Massingham, these were probably the 'white cliffs of Weybourne'. The major managed to bail out over the sea and was rescued but this meant he would live the rest of his life with survivor's guilt. Back off the Germany / Denmark coast his nine man crew appeared to have bailed out successfully. However the sea was too rough for a seaplane to rescue them and only one body was ever found, that by Jens Martin Jensen, who insisted that Staff Sergeant Bernard Sabbath should be given a proper burial.

It seems as though almost every parish in Norfolk and Suffolk suffered some kind of aircraft crash during this stage of the war and by no means were all of them caused by enemy fire. The day after the Holt crash another B-24 Liberator named 'The Belle of the East' crashed at Belton near Great Yarmouth when returning from a raid on the aviation factory at Lubeck. Four of the crew, including the pilot, bailed out while the three who remained on board also survived although a pig sty was demolished here too. It was 7th October, 1944 when 'Yankee Buzz Bomb', another Liberator, crash landed in a barley field just off Long Lane in Southrepps after bombing the Rothensee oil refinery in Magdeburg. After losing two engines the nine man crew jettisoned their bombs but failed to first open the bomb doors setting up tremendous drag. Like Major Garrett had done, Lt. Albert H Grice ordered seven crewmen to bail out while remaining on board with his co-pilot and flight engineer. These three survived but one of those who had bailed out was killed when his parachute failed to open. There was further drama when the USAAF wanted to retrieve the stricken bomber since they needed every plane they could get back into service. After repairs and in spite of the typically wet ground and the short space available they managed to get the plane airborne and then had a hair-raising trip to Horsham when they almost took out the spire of Norwich Cathedral. Peter Sladden of Southrepps Hall later added a tree to his avenue of limes in memory of the lost crewman Sgt. Edward Mire.



Another four months on in February 1945 and there was yet another Liberator crashing locally. Raffaele di Luca, a non-commissioned officer, and Giordani Romagnoli, a private in the Royal Italian Army, were prisoners of war from the internment camp at Pudding Norton outside Fakenham. They had been sent to do fieldwork down Roddy Lane which leads vaguely towards Binham from the strawberry farm at the Langham end of Field Dalling. The bomber 'Berlin Bound' was in fact making for the oil refinery at Magdeburg which 'Yankee Buzz Bird' must have missed. Mechanical problems when still on the ground at Attlebridge were meant to have been fixed but an engine fire was spotted soon after they were over the sea and, fearing this would soon spread to the fuel tanks, the captain turned back immediately. The situation quickly worsened prompting three of the crew to bail out over the sea while two more bailed out as the plane lost height over Langham airfield. This left four crew who didn't have enough time to avoid the crash and the same applied for the two Italians one of whom died four days later. The two who bailed out on land both survived while only one of those who landed in the sea made it ashore meaning there were eight casualties in total. A fine little memorial to them was erected on the 75th anniversary of the crash in 2020. There is a public footpath to it and when I visited there was only a rather ragged Italian flag; I hope the American one hadn't been nicked. I heard a story that a farmer in a nearby farmhouse slept through the incident even after the plane removed a chimneystack but since the crash happened around 9.30 in the morning I find this unlikely.

"The strawberry farm is an expanding enterprise whose poly-tunnels extend into the middle of Field Dalling from the Eastern European hamlet of ten mobile homes. It is good to see this horticultural success story and the owner had applied to open retail outlets and a café on the A148 at Sharrington. In the appeal against NNDC's refusal the Inspector did take account of the incoming Local Plan when dismissing it last November. This was mainly for highway reasons as this is a fast section of road even though the Jarrolds Back to the Garden operation nearer Letheringsett might be considered to have poorer access. I suspect there may be future developments here as the owner is keen to sell produce from within 35 miles along with his fruit and the amount imported might be reduced. Meanwhile the planning battles in Broadland are still being keenly contested. The application for another solar farm at Heydon rehearsed the usual arguments about taking better farmland out of food production and here some 60% is classed Grade 2. This was countered by the claim that sheep grazing between the panels can produce a meaningful income from 124 acres. As at the recently refused Warren Wood application nearby the Council's recommendation was for approval while County Councillor Greg Peck paid greater heed to the guidance to use poorer land. Rhona Bulwer-Long stressed that the Heydon Estate's aim was to raise funds to reinvest in their farming operations and to construct a reservoir although it was stressed that this latter aim should not be used as a planning point. Jo Copplestone disliked the intrusive effect of the panels close to the historic Heydon Hall parkland and to the high fencing around the site. We have been here before. In Tudor times this was not Heydon land but part of the Cawston Manor that passed via Anne Boleyn to her daughter Good Queen Bess and it is believed that Beerhouse Farm was "Her Majesty's Brew House". The solar site was then Black Heath sheep fold with Black Bridge Wood and Bluestone Lake immediately to the north towards Ollands Farm. The lake was originally created as a fish pond and now forms part of the commercial Ashtree Shoot. This year is the 200th anniversary of The Heydon Affray between the estate gamekeepers and the Costessey Gang of poachers. It is uncertain whether the Beerhouse premises continued as a pub and Faden, on his map of 1797, calls it Bear House Farm leading local **Eddie Pye** and others to suspect it was a bear baiting pit. Within the solar site is Pye's Pit which is a prime example of our favourite Professor Carl Sayer's pond restoration work. In the sixteenth century there was a deer park between Eddies's Dix's Farm on the B1149 and the **Harrolds'** (Dry) Docking Farm to the north-east and it would be good if the solar site can revert to a more traditional landscape after the 40 year it has been permitted for. The surprise was that our **Ken Leggett**, clearly conflicted over the respective arguments, voted for the scheme. This helped carry the day by 6 votes to 4 although, even if he had voted against, a tied vote would have been decided on the casting vote of the Chairwoman who was strongly in favour.



FIELD DALLING

I am regularly drawn back to these Bluestone backwaters with the stop on the long dismantled railway line from Melton Constable where it closed in on the route from Norwich to Aylsham via Themelthorpe that is now Marriott's Way. Ten years ago we heard a talk from Richard Girling, the environmental journalist and author from Hindringham, who has written books entitled 'Rubbish!' and 'Greed'. His wife Caroline McGhie is also a prominent journalist who has written a novel called 'The Sitter' which is loosely based on Melton Constable and the railway age. There is a coincidence in that it includes a section about a porn stash which is something that featured in Jessica Streeting's 'Sea Change' that was my Christmas 2025 book recommendation. Allegedly, erotic magazines were confiscated from the boys at Cawston College and then burnt when her father was chaplain there in the late 1970s. Further, Richard Girling has also written a book called 'Sea Change'. If verse form and historical fiction are not your things I would again suggest that you try Nick Acheson whose 'The Meaning of Geese' was one of my other Christmas choices. He is an ambassador for the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and his articles over the last ten years have been collated into an anthology entitled 'This Wild Dream: Celebrating 100 Years of Norfolk Wildlife Trust'. It is beautifully written and produced to commemorate when Dr. Sydney Long acquired 407 acres of marshland at Cley to form the first county wildlife trust in the country. They have launched a Centenary Appeal to raise £100,000 this year having recently spent £4.6 million to acquire the Crowe family's 336 acre Manor Farm at Wood Norton although over five sixths (£3.8 million) was funded by Natural England. They have also managed to acquire 100 acres to the north of Foxley Wood where they have been replacing softwoods with hardwoods over recent decades.

Tuesday 2nd June

AM Leave Norfolk at usual pick up places, time TBC

Arrive at Croft Hotel in Croft on Tees for Lunch

PM visit Croft Grange Farms; which is a large arable enterprise with grain storage and a large christmas tree operation.

Then onto Redworth Hall Hotel

Wednesday 3rd June

AM Visit Metcalfe Farms Leyburn which is a large operation consisting of 1200 dairy cows, Contracting, Quarry and haulage.

Lunch in pub / Leyburn area

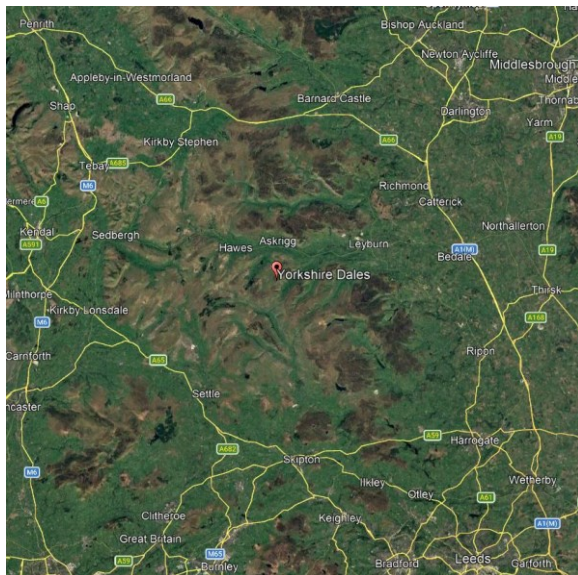
PM Trip through Swaledale on tractor and Trailer over the top passing the Buttertubs and down into Wensleydale, stopping for a pint then along Wensleydale back to the coach.

Evening Dinner altogether at our hotel with our hosts.

Thursday 4th June

Head back towards Norfolk after breakfast with a visit after lunch in Lincolnshire, either the largest celeriac grower in the UK or a cut flower farm TBC

Arrive back in Norfolk approx 6pm



Chairman Peter has provided some more details on *our Yorkshire Itinerary from Tuesday, 2nd to Thursday, 4th June*. To confirm, the cost of sharing a twin room for 2 nights is £160 and for a single £280. This is only two months away so it would be appreciated if you could confirm for me that you are coming while making the appropriate payment to 'Holt & District Farmers' Club' Sort code 20-03-26 A/c No. 10554197; to help Treasurer **Laurie** I suggest you put Y then your initials to identify your payment.

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