

2018 AGM report

The 176th annual meeting of Stalham Farmers' Club was held at the Norfolk Mead Hotel, Coltishall, on Wednesday, February 14, 2018.

A total of 29 members and guest speaker, Dr Lynn Dicks, of the School of Biological Sciences at the University of East Anglia, and her husband, Joe, were present. Earlier 17 members and guests had joined the chairman, Jonathan Deane, for supper.

The chairman opened the meeting at 7.35pm and welcomed the evening's speaker, Dr Lynn Dicks.

Apologies – William Donald, president, Nigel Wright, George Gay, Mike Holliday, Peter Gardiner, Louis Baugh, Joe and Julia Almey, Tim Cane, Christopher Deane, David Faulkner, Roy Houlden.

New members – A husband and wife, Jo and Ian Willetts, were proposed by Nick Deane, who said they had obviously made the right choice in selecting someone to manage their “growing estate.” It was seconded by Ken Leggett.

Minutes

The minutes of the 175th annual meeting had been on the club's website for a year.

Proposed as a true and accurate record by the secretary, seconded by Ken Leggett and approved.

Chairman's report

Jonathan Deane, who had already announced his intention to stand down after serving a two-year term, said that the club had enjoyed limited success at the annual clay shoot against Holt. However, he hoped for better fortune this coming year on June 21.

In October, 18 members had visited the Norfolk Constabulary's headquarters at Wymondham. And the November meeting had given an opportunity to learn more about Norfolk's latest wildlife reserve on the edge of the city and guest speaker, Chris Durdin had shown some splendid slides.

In December, Prof Keith Waldron, of the Quadram Institute BioScience on the Norwich Research Park, briefed members on the background and tremendous opportunities now available to add value to farm crops from “waste” products.

The January meeting, which was attended by 60 members and guests, including a 17-strong party from North Walsham Young Farmers' Club, heard a stimulating presentation by Nuffield scholar, Emily Norton, of nearby Frettenham.

Secretary/ treasurer's report

Michael Pollitt thanked members for their support – and especially the webmaster, Tim Papworth. Incidentally, the site had a total of 26,479 visitors in the year to February 14 – exactly 54 more than the previous 12 months.

The club also greatly appreciated the support of the East Norfolk NFU branch secretaries, David Faulkner, Christopher Deane and James Taylor, for paying the cost of insuring trophies.

As it had been almost impossible to confirm all the speakers before the start of the season, a programme was not published. However, it was the intention to produce a card programme this autumn.

In financial terms, the club had reasonable reserves of more than £3,000 at the December 31 yearend – earning 53p in interest. In the year, the club had recorded a modest surplus of £491 against £1,321 in the previous year. The subscription income of £2,775 was down on the previous year's figures, which had been inflated because of arrears from 2015. Efforts would be made to collect outstanding amounts from all members, who were urged to check their standing orders to ensure that the correct £20pa subscription was being paid. He thanked his wife, CJ Pollitt, for preparing the annual accounts. Tim Papworth asked whether a photographer would attend the dinner again. (Post-meeting note, this has now been confirmed).

After proposing the adoption of the annual accounts and the secretary's report, this was seconded by John Lockhart, and approved. The chairman thanked the secretary for helping to keep the club on the road – and providing invaluable help.

Honorarium – The payment to the secretary/treasurer was agreed, proposed by John Grier, and seconded Nigel Cooke.

Elections

The club's committee, which met on Tuesday, February 7, proposed a three-year term for the new president following William Donald's decision to retire after four years.

President – Thomas Love was proposed by Henry Alston, seconded by John Lockhart, and agreed unanimously. Mr Love spoke of the great honor paid to him – and paid warm tribute to his predecessor, William Donald.

It was also agreed unanimously that Mr Donald be appointed an honorary life vice-president.

Chairman - Mr Love took the chair and Jonathan Deane proposed Henry Alston, seconded by Sally Lomax. Again, agreed unanimously.

The secretary proposed that the retiring chairman, Jonathan Deane, be elected an honorary vice-president in recognition of his tremendous efforts over the past two years – including organisation of the 175th anniversary. Agreed with applause.

Vice-chairman – Chris Borrett was proposed by Henry Alston, seconded Robin Baines. Agreed unanimously.

Secretary/treasurer – Michael Pollitt was proposed by Tim Papworth, seconded by Henry Alston.

Committee – The members include the president, chairman, vice-chairman, treasurer/secretary, webmaster and the former chairman; and Sally Lomax, Robert Norman, Guy Paterson and Jason Cantrill. In addition, the following were duly proposed by Thomas Love, seconded by Nick Deane, and elected – Sarah Ellero, John Lockhart, Christopher Deane and Alastair Ross.

In closing, the chairman thanked retiring committee member Alison Ritchie for her efforts, particularly with the organisation of the 175th anniversary summer party.

Any other business

It was announced that Alastair Ross would be helping to organise the cereals' competitions, which would continue to be judged by Chris Borrett's colleagues at Adams & Howling. And Sarah Ellero would be helping to launch a twitter presence for the club and its members.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm – and the guest speaker, Dr Lynn Dicks, was introduced.

A massive decline of insect pollinators over the past seven decades could be reversed by active and practical management, said Dr Dicks, of the University of East Anglia.

She highlighted the dramatic decline in pollinator populations since 1950.

However, she argued that farmers could rise to the challenge and help to reverse this decline by good, active management and providing more species-rich food sources for insects. There were no simple solutions to the complex issues, but it was becoming increasingly obvious that some pesticide residues after some crops were remaining in soil for longer than many had previously thought. Dr Dicks stressed that analysis of this whole issue was incredibly complex – and especially when one major scientific review had involved 192 governments.

She said that one six-year survey of an arable enterprise in southern England had seen pollinator increases despite taking eight per cent of the farmed land out of production – and maintaining overall yields and production levels.

Given that pollinators boosted total annual farm production by an estimated £630m, there was a clear need to provide the right range and variety of habitat for pollinating insects throughout the year, she said.

Dr Dicks, of the School of Biological Sciences, who has studied wild bee and insects since 1995, said that some 92 ideas for farmers to improve the environment had

been suggested. A website, ConservationEvidence.com listed many of these opportunities, she said.

When she finished her 35-minute presentation, she answered a barrage of questions from members and guests for more than half an hour from members.

She was thanked by retiring chairman, Jonathan Deane, and the meeting closed at 9.10pm.