

## **Lady Dannatt's Annual Dinner Speech**

Norfolk's proud history - Norfolk was at the forefront of the country's agricultural revolution and today farmers, scientists and researchers are continuing that tradition of innovation, said Lady Dannatt.

As Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk since August 2019 and the current president of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association, she told members at Stalham Farmers' Club's annual dinner of her enormous pride in the county's achievements.

"The agricultural revolution began here in Norfolk. The Norwich Research Park is continuing that remarkable tradition and how.

"But it is you, the very cream of our county, our extraordinary farming and agricultural community who are yet again having to learn to adapt and live with substantial change, leaning into the challenges of the future.

"It is you the farmers who plant the seeds and ensure their growth thus creating a brighter and more sustainable future for us all. Farming is about nurturing the crop and the prospects for future generations," said Lady Dannatt.

One of the greatest sadnesses of my first two years as Lord Lieutenant was the absence of the Royal Norfolk Show during the pandemic. "Ever since I was a small child the Show has been one of the year's greatest highlights. Norfolk without a Royal Norfolk Show would be like Norwich without its football club or Norwich without its cathedral."

She said the RNAA's Managing director Mark Nicholas, incidentally the guest speaker at the club's 2024 dinner, had "set the association back on the extraordinary and creative path it follows today. That Food Hall initiative is truly inspiring."

It has been an enormous privilege and joy to be invited to be president of the Royal Norfolk Show and the RNAA and join the 80,000 people at the Norfolk Showground last June. "And cutting the turf to launch the new Norfolk Food Hall two months later was quite literally the icing on the cake.

"The RNAA had so much to be proud of. Education and learning projects, promoting agriculture and innovation, a focus on STEM subjects, encouraging diversification and so the list goes on.

"As we all know Norfolk is historically an agricultural county - the agricultural revolution that kickstarted the industrial revolution started here in Norfolk – Coke of Holkham, Townshend of Raynham, you know the story.

"However recent government policies, as you know only too well, are impacting farmers in a pretty disastrous way. This includes the implementation of new farm and conservation funding schemes as well as the proposed changes to inheritance tax for agricultural businesses. It is unsurprising that Whitehall has been clogged up with tractors on more than one occasion.

Our agricultural industry may be under intense pressure right now but the nation needs to be fed and buying British must be the best for all.

In an increasingly uncertain and impoverished world we have so much for which to be thankful across the county. But it is the celebration of Norfolk's values, defined as they are, by enormous generosity, with a quiet determination and essential invaluable adherence to community and commitment that really makes all the difference.

"However, my role as Lord Lieutenant is strictly non-political but as His Majesty's representative in this county, I share his aim to have a national community at ease with itself, safe and secure in our borders with all citizens having the very best opportunities in life.

"On behalf of His Majesty the King, may I thank each and every one of you for the service you give and the sacrifices you undoubtedly make on a regular basis. Norfolk owes you all a profound debt of gratitude, indeed. Thank you.

After presenting the prizes and awards, she was thanked by vice-chairman Jason Cantrill, who gave her a copy of Alec Douet's *Breaking New Ground* – a history of Norfolk's agriculture 1914 to 1984.