

Annual meeting of Stalham Farmers' Club, Sutton Staithe Hotel

The 172nd annual meeting.

Wednesday, February 12, 2014

1. The chairman, Christopher Deane, welcomed members and the guest speaker, Tom Bradshaw.

2. Apologies – William Donald, Roy Houlden, Roger Beck, Richard Hirst, Alistair Wright, Jason Cantrill, Robin Baines, Michael Eales, Sally Lomax, Greg Smith.

3. The minutes of the 171st annual meeting, which had been circulated, were signed.

4. The following new members were proposed

James Anderson, proposed Greg Anderson, seconded Jonathan Deane.

William Love, proposed Thomas Love, seconded Tim Papworth.

Henry Catling, proposed William Sands, seconded Robert Norman.

Emily Page, proposed Robert Norman, seconded Tim Papworth.

Ben Catling, proposed Robert Norman, seconded John Lockhart.

5. Chairman's report. Christopher Deane said that the annual dinner, attended by a total of 170 members and guests, had been served roast rib of beef. The guest speaker, was the Lord Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Rev Graham James.

In May 2013, a visit by 65 members and guests had been made to Stody Lodge, Melton Constable, by invitation of Adele MacNicol and family. After drinks on the lawn, supper for 50 was served at the estate's pub, the Hunworth Bell. A total of £400 was donated by the club on behalf of the Holt Youth Project.

The annual clay shoot against Holt had been held at Bawdeswell, again thanks to organisers Robert Simpson and Robert Norman.

Other highlights of a busy year had been the chairman's farm walk, which included a tour of Bewilderwood, and finished with a barbecue at Hoveton Hall. Thanks to the hosts including Sir John Blofeld, and Andrew Buxton and Nick Deane and Bure Farm Services.

A walking tour from Dilham, led by Alistair Paterson, and his son, Luke, had been enjoyed by 36 members. The sight of cattle grazing on the marshes on a summer's evening was also memorable. Then, a light supper had been enjoyed at the Crown, Smallburgh.

In October, a party of 20 members had toured Archant's print centre. The smell of "ink" and the sight of giant presses rolling almost 18 hours a day was another fascinating insight into the world of print journalism and magazine publishing.

The autumn season of indoor meetings started with a relatively last-minute briefing about farming in Zambia. Robin Baines, who together with fellow members of the Bure Valley Rotary Club, had raised more than £15,000 to ship a tractor to Zambia. It was to be used to help clear land for cultivation by a charity, helping equip young people with the skills to earn a living by working on the land.

A leading Norfolk farm manager, Poul Hovesen, of Sir John White's Salle estate, and director of farming at Holkham, and Dr Mark Stevens, of BBRO (British Beet Research Organisation). More than 50 members took part in a lively question and answer meeting in December, which continued long after proceedings ended at 9.45pm.

An initiative to forge closer relationships with members of two young farmers' clubs, Acle and North Walsham, resulted in a total of 46 YFC members and guests sitting down to supper in January. Then, the Farmers Weekly Young Farmer of the Year, Jonathan MacInnes-Skinner, aged just 24, talked about his expanding arable and livestock enterprise. He was also Gressingham's largest duck finisher as well. A remarkable presentation, which was appreciated by about 80 members and guests.

Another new venture – 10-pin and bowls against Holt was another great success. The club's skills at 10-pin were better than bowls but a total of 72 members from both clubs thoroughly enjoyed the proceedings and the meal. John Tallowin was top scorer with 174 – thanks too help with organising from Tim Papworth and Robert Norman and the efforts of long-serving skipper William Donald.

The new website was also in the process of being launched, again with Tim Papworth at the helm.

The first chairman's tour was also being planned and the plan was to visit at least farms in Essex – and spending one night away.

He concluded by thanking members, committee members for their support, together with the speakers and his colleagues at the East Norfolk NFU branch

His report was seconded by Ken Leggett.

Secretary's report/ treasurer's report. Michael Pollitt, who presented the financial report, noted that there had been a surplus of £288.66 on the year. Subscriptions had been £1595 – a decline of £20 on the previous year. The dinner had made a modest surplus of £142.45, bank interest had been £1.86. The cost of postage/ printing was £60, a reduction from £197.80 – partly because there had been so many changes to the programme that it was not worth printing one. Donations had been £300 and the cost of speakers, hospitality, had been £426.85 against £480.30 in 2013. There was one creditor for £541.81 – the secretary's outstanding honorarium.

The club's reserves remained strong - £3807.03 in the deposit account and £1,071.61 in the current account.

In proposing his report to members, Mr Pollitt formerly proposed the payment of the £500 annual honoraria for the previous year This was seconded by John Purling and agreed.

Office holders

On a proposal from the chair, it was agreed to re-elect the office holders – president, David Ritchie; honorary life vice-presidents, Roger Beck, Frank Read; and the honorary vice-presidents – Hugh Crane, William Donald, Ken Leggett MBE, Michael Pollitt and Nigel Wright.

Chairman – Christopher Deane proposed Neil Jordan, seconded George Gay. Agreed.

Vice-chairman – After some discussion, Alan Beck agreed to stand as acting or temporary vice-chairman until a replacement could be found. On a proposal by Christopher Deane, seconded by John Lockhart, this was agreed.

Secretary/ treasurer – Michael Pollitt was proposed by Tim Papworth, seconded by Luke Paterson. Agreed.

Committee members – The following were proposed by James Paterson, seconded by Andrew Sands to join the committee – Jason Cantrill, Jonathan Deane, Sally Lomax and Alison Ritchie.

As there was no further business, the meeting was closed at 8.05pm.

The chairman introduced the guest speaker, Tom Bradshaw, who gave one of the most remarkable and stimulating talks on soil/ structure and his rapidly-expanding farm business in Essex. After lengthy discussion, the vote of thanks was given by Luke Paterson.