# November 2026 club report -

Highlights of the first indoor meeting of the 2026 winter season at Wroxham Barns on Wednesday, November 11, 2026. A total of 17 members and guests joined the chairman Jason Cantrill for supper including the president, Sir William Cubitt and Lady (Lucy) Cubitt.

There was one of the best attendances at an indoor meeting for many months as extra chairs were set out to accommodate almost 50 members and many guests. Although a total of 40 signed the attendance book, many did not.

The meeting began at 7.35pm and the chairman welcomed the two speakers, Henry Shropshire, of Cambridgeshire-based G's, and Alex Duncan, farms director for Martham-based East Coast Growers. He also congratulated two club members – firstly Bob Clabon as the first winner of the National Farmers' Union award for outstanding leadership and contribution to the industry, presented by Ken Leggett, himself a former club chairman and life vice-president. There was loud applause for James Chapman, of Martham, who recently won the Farmers Weekly Farmer of the Year Award and the Arable Farmer of the Year title.

Apologies – William Love, vice-chairman, Tim and Emma Papworth, Jo and Ian Willetts, Graham Duncanson, Greg Smith, Becky Collen, Joe Buxton and James Taylor.

New members – Six members were duly elected: Frances Roberson, proposed Michael Pollitt, seconded Louis Baugh; Simon Jenner by Greg Smith, sec Simon Daniels; Toby Mermagen by Robin Baines, sec Richard Hirst; Tony Oakley by Tim Papworth, sec Chris Borrett; Henry Catling by Jason Cantrill, sec Jonathan Deane; Charlie Lockhart by Michael Pollitt, sec George Gay.

Chairman's update – Jason Cantrill reported on a highly successful visit to Hall Farm, Upton, by invitation of Nicholas Crane and his son George. The optical robotic grader was clearly a fascination as was the potential of a heavy-duty compactor for dealing with plastic farm products. The visit to the farm's 330,000 cubic metre capacity reservoir – in the rain – was also a feature. The 25-strong party of members had then enjoyed an informal light supper at the Upton White Horse, provided by the club.

There had been very strong support from members for the revived clay pigeon shoot against Holt, which won the trophy on a count-back.

An invitation to visit the Cantley beet sugar factory in early December was on the cards, Members would be informed once further details were known.

Secretary's report – Michael Pollitt said that judging of the two beet competitions had been completed on November 9. It was somewhat challenging especially in the mist and murk but it was completed successfully thanks to the judge Charlie Lockhart, of British Sugar. There had been a record entry of 16 crops, including several new entrants.

The potato judging had been completed - thanks to Robin Baines and David Youngs. All the results will be announced at the club's annual dinner on March 24 at the Salhouse Lodge.

Grain samples, please by December 9 at our next meeting, to Neal Sands at Catfield or Chris Borrett.

A total of more than 17,000 words from club reports in the 1930s have now been transcribed by the secretary. It is planned to upload them to the website shortly, once they've been checked. Watch this space.

Guest speaker Henry Shropshire, of Cambridge-based G's, delivered a "tour de force" as he outlined his theme – *Preparing to farm for 2040, with success*." Incidentally, the club marks its 200th anniversary in 2041, so very relevant. And one of the family's enterprises, G S Shropshire & Sons, managed by Martin Hammond, recently won the latest Norfolk Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group's Ian MacNicol Memorial Trophy. It is where the 5,000-year-old Wissington bog oak, 13 metres long, was found in the spring 2012. Since then another giant bog oak, one of 20 metres long, has also been found!

Mr Shropshire said that a long-term strategy of continual investment in the business started by his grandfather in 1952 was being continued by the current generation led by Guy, Charles and himself. It required massive investment in machinery, technology and especially the staff. The drive for constant innovation was central as more and more technology was delivering results in a highly-competitive and demanding salad and fresh vegetable sector.

He also suggested that East Anglia's farmers, landowners and managers could play a pro-active role in a future water supply scenario. For example, they had just built a large reservoir on the Cambridgeshire fens at a cost close to £2 per cubic metre to store 700,000 cu m.

However, Anglia Water's even larger reservoir, partly to supply the Cambridge area, would cost about £24 per cubic metre. Surely, this could be a business opportunity enterprising farmers to provide more reservoirs on farms across the region, which could provide water for crops and to supply drinking water – potentially earning income for farm businesses. Surely, they could provide reservoirs significantly cheaper than £24 per cu metre!

Alex Duncan, farms director of East Coast Growers, said that there were plans to obtain more land – mostly rented from local farmers – to boost total production from 600ha to 800ha by 2028. The concentration of the business into East Norfolk this year and closing the Sussex operation had transformed the salad-growing business into one of the group's best performers.

Michael Pollitt