

Stalham Farmers' Club

175th anniversary meeting

Wednesday, December 14, 2016 at the Norfolk Mead Hotel, Coltishall.

In attendance 46 members.

A total of 38 members and guests joined the chairman for a special dinner – featuring partridge and fallow deer and eight different vegetables, including beetroot, Jerusalem artichokes, two types of potato, mushrooms and red cabbage. It was a great success.

The chairman, Jonathan Deane, invited members and a number who had been waiting for the meeting to start, to join him in the Loyal Toast. In reply, Sir William Cubitt, who is High Sheriff of Norfolk, proposed the health of Stalham Farmers' Club on the occasion of the 175th anniversary dinner.

Jonathan Deane, chairman, opened the meeting at 7.45pm and welcomed the guest speaker, Chief Inspector Lou Provart, who had been asked at 9.30am that morning to give a presentation on Norfolk's rural policing strategy to members.

Minutes: The secretary said that a report of the last meeting has been on the website since November 17. There had been no comments by members.

Apologies – The president, William Donald, Tim Papworth, Thomas Love, William Love, Louis Baugh, Ryan Snowden, Josh Grimmer, Robin Baines, Sarar Bebb and Sarah Ellero.

New members – Felicity Daniels, proposed by Simon Daniels, and seconded, John Lockhart. This was unanimously agreed.

Chairman's report - Mr Deane then gave some highlights from some of club's minutes dating from 1876 – noting that many farming members had been involved with the club for close to 150 years – and many of the names were familiar – Worts, Durrells, Cubitts at Honing and Bacton, Harveys, Becks. He also noted that in 1917, a Mr WP Cubitt, of Bacton, had beaten a Mr J Love, of Walcott, in the root competition for two acres of Swedes with a yield of 41.3 tons against 35.7 tons. There much laughter and it was agreed to inform the absent Thomas Love of state of affairs.

He also noted that during the first world war that members had been encouraged to stage a pigeon shoot on Tuesdays in February, starting at 2pm, to control this crop pest.

Secretary's report – Michael Pollitt had spoken to the president, William Donald earlier that afternoon. He had very much hoped to attend but was not able to do so.

Mr Donald thanked fellow members for raising £8,000 for good causes and hoped to attend meetings in the spring if his health permitted.

Mr Pollitt said that the Eastern Daily Press had asked for copy for a special article to mark the club's 175th anniversary on December 17, 1841. And Radio 4 had also expressed interest in a possible feature on the club.

He also said that additional reports from the minutes, taken from the 1870s, would appear on the club's website in the next few days.

The club's financial backing had also made it possible for a second edition of retired Aylsham grain merchant's Alec Douet's history of Norfolk agriculture, 1914 to 1972 to be printed. Copies of the book, *Breaking New Ground*, which cost £25 had been collected from the Aylsham printers shortly before the meeting. Copies were also available for members.

Cheque presentations – Mr Deane said that the 175th summer drinks party at How Hill Farm, held by permission of the late Peter Boardman, had been a tremendous event – and he thanked everyone for their efforts – from sponsors to the organising committee.

Mr Deane invited four senior members – Nigel Wright, James Paterson, Ken Leggett, John Tallowin to present the £2,000 cheques - to Alison Ritchie, trustee of the YANA Project, Sir William Cubitt, chairman of the East Anglian Air Ambulance, David Moar of the Big C Appeal, and Michael Pollitt, trustee of Thornage Hall.

Mr Paterson presented the first cheque to Alison Ritchie, of the YANA (You Are Not Alone) Project, which was established eight years ago and has now spreads its wings into neighbouring Suffolk.

Sir William said that the East Anglian Air Ambulance had just carried out its 20,000th mission and that it cost some £10m pa to serve the three counties in East Anglia. As a club member, he regretted that he had been unable to attend the 175th anniversary drinks party at How Hill Farm but said that the donation would be much appreciated.

A founder member of the Big C Appeal, which has now raised more than £25m since it was launched 37 years ago by David Moar, thanked his club for the £2,000 donation. It has really made a difference and would continue to do so, he said.

Finally, the secretary, Michael Pollitt, who was presented with a cheque for Thornage Hall, near Holt, by another long-serving former secretary, Nigel Wright, said that the proceeds would help to build a £357,000 three-bed extension. This would be completed in late March and a son of a well-known East Anglia farming family would be moving to Thornage next spring.

Speaker – Mr Deane introduced Chief Inspector Lou Provar as a Norfolk man, who came from Acle, and since joining the Norfolk Constabulary 17 years ago had been rapidly-promoted. Now responsible for a raft of tasks, it also included rural policing strategy.

In a 45-minute presentation, Ch Insp Provart stressed that rural policing was now a priority and that his dedicated team was determined to renew and forge closer working relationships with farmers, landowners and those living in the countryside. In response to questions from members, he agreed that there had been a loss of focus and connection with some in the countryside. Ch Insp Provart recognised that there was a great opportunity to work together and develop a much closer relationship to prevent crime in rural areas.

He pointed to an innovative scheme, which had started in west Norfolk, which involved enlisting support from gamekeepers and farmers. It has already delivered results in preventing illegal hare coursing.

Finally, he invited members to tour the Wymondham's police headquarters and control room next autumn and thanked the chairman for making the suggestion of a visit.

He was thanked by Sir William Cubitt, who along with the members had been impressed by the "upbeat" and positive presentation of the newly-promoted chief inspector.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.