



# A CENTURY OF GROWING

NFU NORFOLK MARKS ITS FIRST 100 YEARS



# The changing face of Norfolk farming

HECTARES FARMED

**529,403**

IN 1916

**515,218**

IN 2016

PEOPLE WORKING ON THE LAND

**41,000**

IN 1950

**12,500**

IN 2016

HORSES AND TRACTORS ON FARMS

**59,703**

HORSES IN 1915

**3,000** (est)

TRACTORS IN 2018

## THE LANDSCAPE FOR LIVESTOCK

**1915**

**2016**

**129,081**

CATTLE

**74,130**

CATTLE

**351,991**

SHEEP

**116,715**

SHEEP

**117,427**

PIGS

**539,201**

PIGS

NO FIGURE FOR POULTRY

**15.5 MILLION**

POULTRY

## TOP OF THE CROPS

**1915**

(IN HECTARES)

**2016**

(IN HECTARES)

PERMANENT GRASS

**115,304**

WHEAT

**96,599**

BARLEY

**65,315**

BARLEY

**74,686**

CLOVER AND GRASS UNDER ROTATION

**60,455**

PERMANENT GRASS

**53,435**

WHEAT

**58,448**

OILSEED RAPE

**30,962**

OATS

**38,607**

SUGAR BEET

**27,640**

TURNIPS AND SWEDES

**38,039**

POTATOES

**14,455**

MANGOLDS

**22,154**

TEMPORARY GRASS

**11,962**

POTATOES

**6,634**

MAIZE

**11,163**

BEANS

**4,269**

FIELD BEANS

**10,003**

SMALL FRUIT

**3,204**

OTHER VEG AND SALAD

**7,554**



# Celebrating the past, looking to the future

**A**s the guns of the First World War fell silent, it became apparent that all was not in harmony in rural Britain. In the immediate post-war period the Agriculture Act 1920, which was supposed to guarantee minimum cereal prices, was reviewed and eventually repealed. This left farming in a perilous position, with rural Norfolk plunging into recession.

It was against this turbulent backdrop that the National Farmers' Union came to the fore in Norfolk. Branches sprung up in most market towns with the purpose of supporting and lobbying for the interests of farmers.

A century on and there is another Agriculture Bill moving through Parliament, as we prepare for Brexit, and the need for the NFU is as relevant as ever.

Despite the increase in farm size over the century, farming is still very much a fragmented industry and, as individuals, our voice is weak and easily ignored. We are all busy people, growing our crops and tending livestock, and our businesses seldom have the resources to actively lobby, to bring together the relevant facts and disciplines to represent our industry and our businesses successfully. This is where the NFU has been so beneficial and effective

## "A CENTURY ON AND THERE IS ANOTHER AGRICULTURE BILL MOVING THROUGH PARLIAMENT, AS WE PREPARE FOR BREXIT, AND THE NEED FOR THE NFU IS AS RELEVANT AS EVER"

over the past ten decades, fulfilling this role on our behalf.

Great success was achieved with the marketing boards for milk, wool, and potatoes, which brought the country out of food rationing. The NFU assisted farmers and provided the political will to support farming, with capital grants in order to compete through the 1960s and 1970s.

The NFU lobbied hard to ensure the entrance to the European Economic Community was as beneficial as it could be for British farmers and is now working tirelessly on behalf of agriculture following the vote to leave the European Union.

So what of the future? I believe the NFU still has a vital role to play. We are governed, and



the population is influenced, by a generation far removed from the land. We need to explain to them how farmers manage the land and habitats, while growing food for an ever-increasing population.

There are many challenges, especially climate change which seems to manifest itself in extreme weather events, and we, as farmers, will be called upon to help mitigate the effects of climate change. The move to the digital age and the unrelenting march of technology will provide many challenges and great opportunities for our industry.

The need for a strong NFU will continue, to ensure farmers are not disadvantaged, are

rewarded fairly and are able to work within a regulatory and fiscal framework that will allow us to thrive in the years ahead.

As we look back on the great works of the NFU, and the people and farmers of Norfolk who achieved so many benefits for the farmers of the day, we can also take heart that Norfolk farming has a resilient future.

Despite the changes and challenges we face, it is a comforting thought that farming will continue in our wonderful county. Here's to the next 100 years of NFU Norfolk.

**Tony Bambridge, NFU Norfolk County Chairman 2017 and 2018**

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**With grateful thanks to:** Michael Pollitt, Ken Leggett, Norfolk Record Office, the *Eastern Daily Press* (Archant), Archant librarian Rosemary Dixon, Rachel Warner and our NFU Norfolk Centenary sponsors Barclays, Brown & Co, Ben Burgess, Hewitsons, Lovewell Blake, and the Norfolk Farmers Trust.

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# Happy birthday to NFU Norfolk

The NFU in Norfolk has been a strong voice for farming as long as I can remember. I was always grateful to them for the advice and support I received as MP for South West Norfolk. County Secretary Ken Leggett was tireless in arranging meetings and briefings. He subsequently became my adviser, when I became MAFF Minister, so the information flow continued!

I congratulate the NFU on their work so far and know it will continue, for the benefit of us all.

**Baroness Shephard of Northwold**



The NFU is the respected voice of farming. When it comes to fundraising, we can always rely on the NFU network to help us in any way they can, from promoting events to providing stand space at shows. Such loyal support, both here in Norfolk and across the rest of the UK, is greatly valued. Thanks to the NFU, we can reach more people and expand our work.

**Lucy Bellefontaine, R.A.B.I Regional Manager, East of England**



On behalf of the Norfolk County Farms Estate I am delighted to congratulate NFU Norfolk on its centenary. Throughout all this time, the estate has worked alongside NFU Norfolk and its members and that relationship has endured through some incredible changes in the farming industry. We wish all at NFU the best for the future and look forward to meeting future challenges together.

**Duncan Slade, Rural Estates Surveyor, Norfolk County Farms**



Happy 100th birthday to NFU Norfolk. You matter to the city of Norwich, just as you do in the Norfolk countryside. Norwich excels in science and research, with employers who support supply chain technology, all central to modern agriculture. And as our city grows, families are loving farms like White House Farm's cafe, small businesses and PYOs. Here's to another century.

**Chloe Smith, MP for Norwich North**



I would like to offer my support to the NFU in Norfolk and to congratulate you on your centenary. Throughout my time as an MP, I have met with the NFU. I have learnt a lot as a result and have appreciated really good engagement on key issues. The NFU in Norfolk performs a very important role, particularly given the significance of agriculture in our county.

**Norman Lamb, MP for North Norfolk**



Congratulations to NFU Norfolk on 100 years of looking after the interests of the farming community, in a century that has seen unprecedented change. That care, in the past and now, has a huge impact on the welfare of Norfolk as a whole and on its future.

**Keith Simpson, MP for Broadland**



# NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES – 1940s

27 MAY 1940

Advice on how to deal with injured animals in the event of air raids was discussed by the NFU Norfolk executive. A scheme developed by the NFU in Cambridgeshire and the Isle of Ely involved co-operation between veterinary surgeons and butchers, the exceptionally large attendance was told in Norwich.

8 DECEMBER 1944

A motion supporting a national agricultural marketing scheme and control of imports was agreed by Harleston NFU. County Secretary Jim Wright thought that the present world food shortage would be overcome once peace was restored.

10 AUGUST 1946

On holiday at Cromer, NFU President James Turner said, during a visit to Norwich, that the growing number of dairy cows in the county "strikes one immediately" but that sheep numbers were declining. He told an EDP reporter that "the cry for cheap food regardless of its real cost, is inconsistent with a flourishing countryside".

18 DECEMBER 1946

Membership of the King's Lynn branch was "just on 600," said secretary Mr K Hubbard. He looked forward to the time when it would reach 1,000 members. The branch's hailstorm fund raised £3,297.

20 DECEMBER 1948

Norfolk members opposed nationalisation of the land, as a precautionary measure in case the Government should be thinking of doing anything of the kind. Mr J L Brighton, of Wymondham branch, proposed the resolution.

21 MARCH 1949

Norfolk farmers called for stronger beer and lower excise duty at the executive meeting at the Gladstone Club, Norwich. Loddon's motion was agreed after Mr AW Garrod pointed out that £453 tax was charged from each acre of barley.



Our rich natural resources and heritage have made food and farming one of the cornerstones of the local economy, punching above its weight in terms

of jobs, productivity and exports. But this is also a vibrant growth sector, with our region at the forefront of innovation. For the past century the NFU has been a focal point and a champion for food and farming in Norfolk. I'm confident that will continue for years to come.

**Doug Field, chair, New Anglia Local Enterprise Partnership**



I am delighted as a Norfolk resident and as the Member of Parliament for South Norfolk to congratulate NFU Norfolk on reaching its centenary. In these challenging times for agriculture, the support that the NFU gives the farming industry in Norfolk is vital. I will continue to support and lobby the government on behalf of the NFU to ensure the best for the farmers of Norfolk.

**Richard Bacon, MP for South Norfolk**



The Norfolk Association of Agricultural Valuers (NAAV) congratulates NFU Norfolk on its centenary. Agriculture and farming play a vital part in shaping the Norfolk economy and landscape and our members frequently work alongside the NFU to provide excellent advice and support to our mutual clients.

**Rachael Hipperson, NAAV Secretary**



Farming has shaped much of the Norfolk countryside and the culture of the county too. Norfolk farmers are deeply loyal to their

county and to their communities. The centenary of the NFU branch in Norfolk is a time to celebrate the way farmers and farming have shaped Norfolk life and to look, with confidence, to the next hundred years. May God bless your celebrations.

**The Lord Bishop of Norwich, the Rt Revd Graham James**



Tackling rural crime is a key priority for Norfolk Constabulary and many of our successes are attributed to our ongoing partnerships with individuals and organisations, both locally and nationally. One of our key partnerships is with the NFU, which continues to provide a strong voice for farmers and growers, ensuring that your voice is heard and we are tackling the issues most important to you.

**Norfolk Chief Constable Simon Bailey**

# How it all began

**T**he NFU was established in Norfolk at a time of uncertainty and anxiety for farmers. They were facing competing Government demands as the First World War neared its end.

These demands included boosting food production while wheat prices were pegged and also having to pay higher wages and twice the amount of income tax.

**“WITH THE WAR APPROACHING ITS END, WOULD THE INDUSTRY BE SACRIFICED AGAIN?”**

In July 1918, the NFU’s President Edward Nunneley visited Norfolk with a view to starting a county branch, but it would take more meetings to achieve that goal.

Initially, the NFU had an uphill struggle as the influential Norfolk Chamber of Agriculture attracted an estimated 3,000 farmers to Norwich public meetings, which were addressed by national politicians.

The Farmers’ Federation was another force, too, but its numbers were starting to dwindle.

In the final months of 1918, there was recognition that the NFU – founded a decade earlier in neighbouring Lincolnshire – was a more virile, national political force.

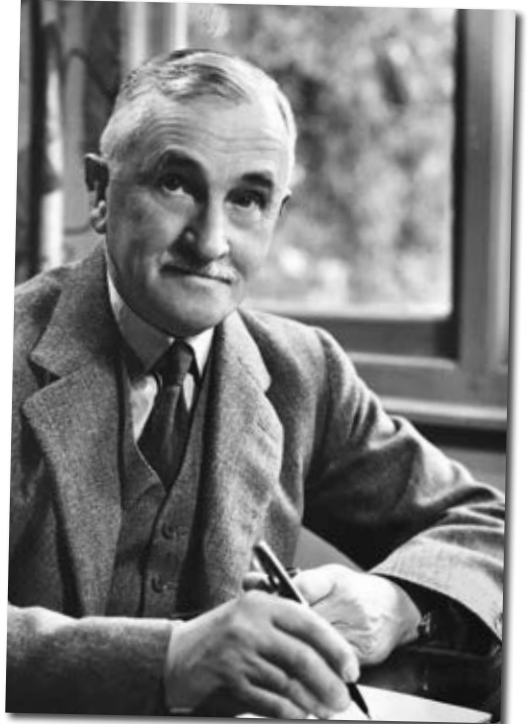
It was a worrying time, given that just a year earlier the Corn Production Act gave financial support to farmers for the first time. With the war approaching its end, would the industry be sacrificed again?

It is likely that informal meetings, akin to a steering group, were held in late 1918, prompted by the NFU President’s visit.

Retired grain merchant Alec Douet wrote his doctorate thesis on the history of Norfolk agriculture between 1914 and 1984 and refers to a meeting in November 1918.

This was attended by farmers including Henry Overman, then Holkham Estate’s largest tenant, W B Taylor, Alfred Lewis, who farmed 2,000 acres at Westacre and Gayton, and Jim Wright, all of them among the founder members of the NFU Norfolk county branch.

Arthur Rackham presided over another crucial meeting on 1 January 1919 as founder



**Alfred Lewis, one of the founder members of NFU Norfolk**

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chairman of the Loddon branch, the first in the county. In a room overlooking Stubbs Green, fellow supporters attending included Jim Wright, Albert Wharton and W B Taylor.

Mr Taylor had been the first county secretary but soon Jim Wright, who farmed at Aldeby, near Beccles, became the driving force in that role. A full-time clerical secretary was also appointed, Olive Cole, who served in that position for a remarkable 48 years.

The first general meeting of NFU Norfolk was held on Saturday 1 November 1919 in Norwich,

when another prominent south Norfolk farmer, George Henry Mutimer of Swainsthorpe, took the chair. Mr Mutimer was to become County Vice-Chairman and serve for eight years.

In May 1944, when Mr Wright had completed 25 years as secretary of the Norfolk branch of the NFU, it was reported that membership had reached 3,500. He was given a cheque for £2,065 13s by members, worth about £81,000 today, and promptly gave £1,000 to the Norfolk & Norwich Hospital to endow a bed in his name.

## FINDING A HOME FOR THE COUNTY BRANCH

It was essential to find a central location for the NFU's headquarters in Norwich.

Norwich livestock market, then one of the country's biggest, was held every Saturday and the Corn Hall was economically important.

NFU meetings were held on Saturday mornings, when farmers came to Norwich. As the search for a permanent site continued, the county branch rented offices in Prince of Wales Road until 1926 and then above the National Provincial Bank in London Street.

County Secretary Jim Wright played a pivotal role in the planning and raising of funds, but finding a suitable location was not easy, until the directors of Bonds department store, now John Lewis, came forward.

On 17 October 1949 it was reported that a site for 'Agricultural House' in Norwich had been purchased from Bonds Ltd for £1,750 in Ber Street, rising to £1,821 with legal fees and charges.

In the immediate post-war years, when materials were in short supply, and even cement was hard to acquire, an official building licence was needed.

The Ministry of Agriculture rejected the original scheme for a two-storey office for the Ber Street site in September 1950, leading to frustration at the lack of progress.

However, a postal vote of executive members rejected buying a large house at Thorpe, the plans were modified and a scheme accepted that used a less-ornate design. This cost about £14,000 of the £15,000 funds available.

Building work commenced and the executive's first meeting was held at Agriculture House on 20 September 1952.

Agriculture House played a central role in the life of NFU Norfolk until regionalisation. It was sold in September 1998, with part of the proceeds going to establish the Norfolk Farmers Trust.

**Agriculture House in Ber Street, pictured in 1955**



## NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES – 1950s

**17 JULY 1950**

A fund for members with crops devastated by hailstorms was started by Norfolk branch. The areas included the Rocklands, Stow Bedon, Hockham, Shropham and towards East Wretham and Little Ellingham. One farmer with 50 acres lost seven acres of barley and four of oats. The fund raised £803 15s 9d.

**22 OCTOBER 1951**

Mr F S Print, of the horticulture committee, said the prohibitive cost of shotgun cartridges discouraged control of jackdaws and rooks. Purchase tax on cartridges for pest control should not apply, he argued.

**23 JANUARY 1952**

James Alston, of Calthorpe, warned a London conference that Britain was losing about 100 acres of land a month to housing, playing fields and other similar projects, equal to 12 average farms a year. A resolution was carried deploring the encroachment on farmland.

**17 NOVEMBER 1958**

Diesel trains should carry front red lights to help people crossing the line, said Mr W Burt at the NFU executive. As British Rail diesels were quieter and mostly painted dark green, they were difficult to see on dull days, he argued.

**22 DECEMBER 1958**

Hundreds of gallons of milk had to be thrown away because roads were blocked by snow, said Mr R G Joice. The chairman, Edwin de Grey Seaman had 'lost' five of his six lorries in the snow for five days and thousands of people were unable to obtain milk, he said.

**22 JANUARY 1959**

Mr G E Daniels, of the Acle branch, warned of the danger of foot and mouth disease being imported through meat from South America. His branch argued Argentina should be informed that, if steps had not been taken to control the disease within five years, exports of beef to Britain would not be allowed.

# Turbulent times for the new county branch

**T**here was little time for the newly-formed NFU Norfolk to find its feet before it faced its first major test.

Thousands of farmworkers in Norfolk took part in the Great Strike in 1923, which was to cause bitter divisions and sour industrial relations for years.

An estimated 7,000 workers went on strike, although some estimates suggest that 10,000 or even 20,000 took part.

The seeds of conflict were sown in 1921, when the Government reneged on a four-year deal to support agriculture, the so-called Great Betrayal.

Wheat prices plunged, halving in value to about £10 per ton in just six months. With wages one of the biggest single costs, farmers were desperate and foot and mouth disease, drought and a poor 1922 harvest added to their problems.

In 1921, the wage rate was 44 shillings (s) and five pence (d), £2.22 in decimal currency,

for a working week of about 50 hours. After the Agricultural Wages Board was abolished, and farm support scrapped, the Government set up county conciliation committees with equal membership of employers and trades unions. However, as history was to show, neither side had faith in this political solution.

In September 1922, Norfolk's conciliation committee recommended 25s per week. As prices fell again, the NFU's eight members proposed more reductions. One of NFU Norfolk's founders, George Mutimer, told Diss branch members in February 1923 that "the labourer must recognise that his interests were our interest".

Instead, it sparked fury among the unions. With around one third of Norfolk farmers now NFU members and prices continuing to fall, strike action was expected. There had been recent walkouts in west Norfolk and around St Faith's, Norwich.

On 9 March, Mr Mutimer advised a further

**One of NFU Norfolk's founders, George Mutimer**



wages cut, to 22s and 6d for the summer's 54-hour week, and there would be no guarantee that work would be available.

Talks were held at the Bishop of Norwich's Palace but without success. A delegation including George Edwards, of the National Union of Agricultural Workers, and Norfolk's Henry Overman and Jim Wright met at Downing Street on 17 March. The workers wanted the wages board back and farmers pressed for import tariffs, which would boost prices and make it possible to pay higher wages.

## NORFOLK FARMERS TRUST – SUPPORTING NFU NORFOLK IN ITS CENTENARY YEAR

The Norfolk Farmers Trust has been helping NFU members, and their families, for almost 20 years.

The trust was established in October 1999 to manage the funds raised when the NFU's office in Ber Street, Norwich, was sold. It is overseen by a group of trustees, chaired by Richard Hirst.

To date more than £122,000 has been paid out in grants to organisations and individuals within Norfolk. These include R.A.B.I., the Spring Fling at Norfolk Showground, and the Aylsham Show Food and Farming Awards.

The trust also runs the biennial Chris Lewis Award, an awards scheme that helps young livestock farmers working within Norfolk with a new or existing livestock enterprise.

**Entries for the 2019 Chris Lewis Award are now open. To find out more contact Edward Stanton at Park Farm, Snettisham, King's Lynn, PE31 7NQ or email: [stanton@supanet.com](mailto:stanton@supanet.com)**

**RIGHT: Chris Lewis Award 2017 winner Michelle Lakey with Jane Lewis**



**BELOW: The Chris Lewis Award 2017 finalists**





## NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES – 1960s

### 18 JANUARY 1960

A record 5,030 members had paid a total of £23,866 subscriptions, an increase of almost £10,000 on the figure of 10 years ago, said County Secretary James Christie. The branch appreciated a gift of £1,000 from the widow and family of James Alston, of Uphall, which would be used to assist members in business difficulties.

### 20 NOVEMBER 1961

Cantley factory would accept sugar beet delivered by wherry for one more season, reported Mr A R Askew, of the beet committee. Some 28 growers, with 591 acres, still delivered by wherry.

### 4 JANUARY 1964

At King's Lynn, the annual meeting was attended by 25 members out of a possible 650. This represented just 4% of the membership, said Chairman Mr D Symington. "Is this a record for lethargy among NFU branches in the eastern counties?" he asked.

### 19 MAY 1966

A bulk rail contract for Norwich and Yarmouth growers would start in mid-June, said horticultural secretary Terry Read. It would cost £5 plus a halfpenny per box of flowers. Two stations would be used, Norwich and Yarmouth Vauxhall.

### JANUARY 1967

A Wash barrage would endanger farming systems and prevent reclamation from the sea of much more valuable farmland, said Robin Kerkham at the NFU annual meeting. He was born on land reclaimed from the sea in 1820 and his brother farmed land reclaimed in 1950.

### 13 FEBRUARY 1968

Norfolk farmers offered 1,929 livestock towards the restocking scheme to help foot and mouth disease victims. The offer comprised 1,507 cattle, 150 pigs, 262 sheep and 10 goats. The Queen's Sandringham estate had made the first offer, 12 Hereford cross blue grey bulling heifers.



Farm workers protesting in the 1920s

## "THE WORKERS WANTED THE WAGES BOARD BACK AND FARMERS PRESSED FOR IMPORT TARIFFS"

But Prime Minister Bonar Law, who was ill and would resign just two months later, refused to take action.

When notice of the wage reduction was posted on 16 March, battle lines were drawn. About 1,500 men in the Castle Acre, Massingham, Walsingham and Fakenham areas came out, and others around Aylsham and North Walsham stopped work.

The dispute became increasingly bitter and

Norfolk's Chief Constable was worried as large bands of up to 300 cycling pickets descended on farms and 'persuaded' men to come out. He even asked for 600 officers from across the country to help deal with incidents.

But it was hard for the strikers, surviving on 6s a week, to maintain the strike and, when union funds began to be exhausted, a settlement seemed desirable.

Ramsay MacDonald, Labour's leader, was asked to intervene. He had just settled a dispute in the builders' trade. On 18 April, both sides met at the House of Commons and agreed on 6d an hour or 25s a week for 50 hours.

It ended the strike but it took almost 20 years for wages to return to 1919 levels, as the agricultural depression became even more severe.

## FARMERS' FESTIVE CONCERNS

For the first time in the history of Norfolk agriculture, farmers in 1929 had to pay extra to their men for working on Christmas Day.

If farmers could only grow eight sacks of corn an acre, maybe they should cease arable production, was the response of one NFU executive member.

Almost a decade later, wage rates had been cut. In the *Eastern Daily Press* of 14 December 1931, the following official wages were published. For workers – excluding teamsmen, cowmen or shepherds, yardmen, sheep or bullock tenders – summer 53 hours, winter 48 hours, Good Friday week 42 hours – 21 years and over, 30s; 18 years 25s and under 15 years 10s. An additional 5s and 6d was payable to positions such as teamsmen and cowmen.







## CAMPAIGNING FOR LE BOEUF ANGLAIS



Over the years NFU Norfolk has successfully mobilised its members for protest marches and rallies, including a mass protest in Ipswich in 1939, a demonstration for European sugar beet growers in Brussels in 2005 and the #SOS Dairy event in Westminster in 2012.

But probably its politest protest was in November 1999, during a campaign to lift the French ban on British beef.

A group of Norfolk farmers walked about 50 yards from Chapelfield in Norwich to present a joint of topside to Huguette Andries-Smith, honorary consul for France in East Anglia.

County Chairman Robert Steven and Regional Board Chairman Nigel Wright delivered a letter and the beef to the consul's office, along with some seasonal Norfolk vegetables. They asked the consul to send the letter to French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin.

Nine Norfolk farmers including Nick Deane and Dick Broughton paraded behind a banner declaring: "Le boeuf Anglais est arrivé!" The beef, Aberdeen Angus, was produced by Mary and Alan Beck from her pedigree herd near Stalham.

*The Eastern Daily Press* reported that the honorary consul accepted the beef with a smile and said she would enjoy eating the joint.

**Robert Steven and Nigel Wright lead the delegation**

## Market boycott gets strong backing

**O**ne effective demonstration of farmer power was the first national boycott of livestock markets, in May 1970.

This was well supported in Norfolk and highly effective, although the NFU later lost a government legal challenge and had to give an undertaking never to repeat it.

A special Norfolk executive on 6 April was held, which showed farmers to be in a militant mood. Former County Chairman Dick Hill said that six months ago most sectors had been flourishing but soaring costs, lower returns and a poor farm price review had angered many producers.

The NFU's first week-long ban on livestock sales was a protest against the government's farm price review. Nationally, 250,000 pigs, 50,000 cattle and 200,000 sheep were held back from markets up and down the country as farmers backed their newly-elected President, Henry Plumb.

The impact in Norfolk was marked. At Norwich, then one of the country's biggest markets, the total cattle entry was barely a tenth of the previous week – 129 fat cattle, 64 barren cows, 24 stores and 32 calves. A week earlier, there were 932 fat cattle, 190 barren cows, 485 stores and 416 calves.

At Burnham Market's livestock market, only five bullocks were entered.

Aylsham's entries were down 50% to just 411 fat pigs, while GA Key's sale of store pigs was down by almost 60%.

King's Lynn market had 48 fat cattle for sale against 603, which were sold in just 23 minutes by auctioneer Gordon Brown. The fat pig entry

of 300 was half the number of the previous week and store cattle numbers were a quarter, or 100 against 400. Reflecting on the response of Norfolk farmers, NFU Norfolk County Chairman Mike Garrod said: "We did what we set out to do and I don't think Norfolk let them down."



**Cattle for sale at a livestock market circa 1970. The boycott had a major impact in Norfolk**

# “If the NFU didn’t exist, we would have to invent it”

Farmer William Brigham looks back on more than 50 years of involvement with the NFU in Norfolk

**A**rable and dairy farmer William Brigham has been a member of the NFU for well over half a century – and actively involved with the organisation for much of that time.

The former branch and county chairman also served on the NFU’s national dairy board, so he has a remarkable insight into how it has worked at local, regional and national level.

“If the NFU wasn’t there, we’d all be running around trying to invent it,” said William, from Lyng near Norwich.

“It’s been a very important organisation to me and I try and get people who are not

members to wake up to the fact that it needs their support as well.

“I think the best thing about it is you have like-minded people you can talk to and an organisation that can advise you, help you and, on occasion, stop you doing something that could cost you a lot of money.”

William’s father Lawrence Brigham and uncle Oscar Brigham were NFU members but resigned from the organisation over its support for the 1947 Agriculture Act.

“They had rented out farmland but then couldn’t get the tenant to leave because he had security of tenure under the Act,” said William.

After leaving school William did not

immediately go into farming as he was more interested in engineering.

When he did return to the family farm, in the early 1960s, he decided the business should re-join the NFU.

“I felt that the NFU was the right organisation for our farm, especially with its links to NFU Mutual as well,” he said.

His friend and fellow farmer Peter Thomas suggested they should start attending branch meetings, then held at the Kings Head in Dereham and William went along, following in Peter’s footsteps as chairman of the branch.

Later, in 1991 he was elected as NFU Norfolk County Chairman, just as the NFU’s



Women’s Institute National Federation chair Ruth Bond visited William’s farm in 2012 as the WI urged the public to support dairy farmers



## NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES – 1970s

### JANUARY 1970

Norfolk grower, Norman Bailey, of Martham, chairman of the county horticulture committee, provided red carnations for buttonholes for NFU President Sir Gwilym Williams, and his top team at the annual meeting. He persuaded the NFU to provide window boxes to brighten up the Knightsbridge headquarters.

### 25 MAY 1970

Bill Perowne said that the telephone system was so poor in the Fakenham and Docking area that it had taken 20 minutes to contact the operator to make a 999 call at South Creak.

### 22 JANUARY 1972

Norfolk horticulture secretary Terry Read said that Norwich Growers, formed six years ago, had 111 members and £40,000 turnover. It had bought 80,000 tomato boxes and just sold its millionth lettuce box.

### 29 JANUARY 1972

County Secretary James Christie said a membership drive had gained 206 new members, increasing the membership to 3524. Norfolk sent 74.8 per cent of total subscription income to headquarters, the highest percentage in the UK.

### 21 APRIL 1975

NFU Norfolk voted 60 to six that it was in the long-term interest of Britain's farmers to stay in Europe.

### 26 APRIL 1976

A Yare barrier would boost agricultural production, executive members were told. A barrage would remove risks of flooding in the marshland area between Norwich and Yarmouth, said Major Derek Allhusen. Mr E Basey-Fisher said that he had to apply 10 tons of salt an acre on his marshes after floods, with recovery taking four years.

### 23 OCTOBER 1978

Broadland farmer Charles Wharton, Vice-Chairman of the Milk Marketing Board, urged producers to vote to keep the board. "Vote, and vote early," he told NFU members.



**Farmer William Brigham today and (inset) pictured in the early 1990s**



move towards regionalisation was causing concern in Norfolk and some other counties.

"At my first executive meeting there

was a resolution that Norfolk should withdraw from the national organisation and go on its own," said William.

"We had visits from the great and the good of the NFU over that period, all wanting us to stay within the national umbrella. Personally I felt that NFU Norfolk would not be able to replicate the advice and services that the national NFU offered. I just didn't feel it was viable.

"I suppose I did enough to persuade people who may have been sitting on the fence to change their minds and we managed to win

the day. That was important as I know that Cornwall was considering withdrawing as well, with members there waiting to see what decision Norfolk reached."

William was grateful for the support he received from the NFU, and fellow Norfolk farmers, in 1999, after protestors invaded the farm to attack a trial crop of genetically modified maize.

"I remember walking into a room of Norfolk farmers after that and they all applauded me. We had been participating in a legal trial and there was no question that farmers and the NFU were behind me," he said.

After the protestors were cleared of criminal damage charges, NFU President Ben Gill wrote to Home Secretary Jack Straw to raise his concerns.

Mr Gill said: "We find it extraordinary that, even with such clear evidence, a not guilty verdict was reached. This gives the green light to wanton vandalism and trespass."

## A FAMILY BUSINESS AT LYNG

Today William continues to farm in a family business, L.G. Brigham & Sons, with his brothers Eddie and John and his son Philip. They have a milking herd of about 150 cows as well as 300 acres of land on the home farm. The farm also includes a fishing lake diversification on 24 acres, 112 acres of off-lying land and 100 acres of rented land.

The pressures today are similar to the pressures 25 years ago, when William was one of five farmers who featured in a documentary about farming in the county. He explained then how the farming business had to support three farming brothers and their families.

He told the film: "We have very much staked our future on dairy cows because we have just spent a great deal of money on refurbishing the milking parlour."

# Farming and the NFU – through the lens

A look back in pictures at the history of NFU Norfolk



**ABOVE:** James Alston (Calthorpe), who served as county chairman in 1954, is pictured at London's Guildhall in 1967. He was there to present the trophy to the recipient of that year's Dairy Queen Award, Christine Ginns from Lancashire

**ABOVE:** Then NFU Deputy President Meurig Raymond is pictured with Richard Hirst at the launch of the NFU's Why Farming Matters to the Broads report. The 2010 report highlighted the contribution food and farming made to the Broads and the policies needed to ensure agriculture continued to thrive



**LEFT:** His Royal Highness Prince Edward visited the NFU marquee and Let's Talk Farming Roadshow in his role as Royal Norfolk Show President in 2014. He is pictured with County Chairman Ken Proctor, County Adviser Alex Dinsdale, Regional Director Pamela Forbes, Norwich Group Secretary Nicky Savage and NFU Vice-President Guy Smith





**LEFT:** NFU Norfolk members have played a full part in campaigns to highlight the importance of food and farming over the years. The photo shows members in central Norwich, supporting the regional launch of the NFU's Care of British Farming initiative in 2003

**BELOW:** NFU members Edward Stanton (left) and Richard Savory are pictured in 1992, before taking the Sheep Show on a trailer to Hyde Park for the second Food and Farming Festival. More than one million people are estimated to have attended the festival over its four-day run



**ABOVE:** This photo shows farmers turning out in force for a meeting, but mystery surrounds why, where and when. The photo was found among the NFU Norfolk archive documents deposited at Norfolk County Council's Record Office in Norwich. If anyone can shed more light on it we would be very interested to know



**BELOW:** The NFU's national centenary in 2008 was marked in Norfolk with a celebratory lunch at Easton College. Former county chairmen joined the current Chairman Bob Young at the event. He is pictured with John Howard, who served as chairman in 1966



**ABOVE:** A special presentation of a tea maker and cheque for £870 was made to retiring group secretary Tom Boddy on 24 November 1973 to mark his 27 years' service. He had more than doubled the membership of Downham and District NFU since his appointment. Mr Boddy is pictured (second right) at the annual dinner in Southery with County Secretary James Christie (left), Branch Chairman Claude Martin (second left) and County Chairman Pat Hood



# The cream of the crop

NFU Norfolk has thrived thanks to the commitment of members and staff over the past 100 years. Here we profile three of those farming stalwarts.

## 'CHAMPION OF FARMING' JIM WRIGHT



**L**ong-serving NFU County Secretary Jim Wright was regarded as one of East Anglia's foremost public figures, who had a significant influence on agriculture and politics. He was county secretary to NFU Norfolk for almost 30 years, until 1948, and was chairman of Norwich City for 14 years from 1935.

Born in London in 1882, he had a brief business career before starting to farm aged 25. After his uncle retired from Oaklands Farm at Aldeby, near Beccles, he rapidly expanded, taking over three farms and running a total of 900 acres, which he later sold in 1946.

He became the second county secretary of NFU Norfolk in 1919. When he handed over the reins, the branch had more than 4,100 members.

A champion of farming's interests, this led him to stand for Parliament, as reported on page 10. From the inception of the Norfolk Agricultural Wages Committee, he led the employers' side and served on the Norfolk Agricultural Executive from 1939 to 1948.

The *Eastern Daily Press* reported on an event held to mark his 25th anniversary as county secretary, in May 1944, under the headline *Champion of Farming*. The report described Mr Wright as "one of the greatest assets that agriculturalists in East Anglia have had".

## FARMING ADVOCATE JAMES CHRISTIE



Barrister James Christie was appointed as NFU Norfolk's third county secretary in 1948, after a ringing endorsement from former County Chairman James Alson of Uphall.

Mr Alson had worked with Mr Christie on the War Ag, the Norfolk War Agricultural Executive Committee, and described him as "the most brilliant young man I know". His efforts to increase

food production as secretary of the committee had earned him an MBE in the 1948 New Year's honours.

Mr Christie was a Norfolk man with knowledge of agriculture and horticulture and a barrister with wide experience of legislation.

During his NFU career, he oversaw the construction of the county headquarters, Agriculture House, and guided the executive committee through 300 meetings.

He was a regular contributor to the *Eastern Daily Press* and in his last column, on 30 August 1978, referred back to post-war efforts to increase self-sufficiency. He said when Agriculture Minister Tom Williams asked for increased production, in 1949, he really meant what he said.

"How different it is today when Ministers give the impression that they could not care at all if food production in this country went down to virtually nothing, provided only that we could buy the food we need from abroad," he wrote.

A presentation dinner was attended by more than 500 members and two of the NFU's longest-serving presidents, Lord Netherthorpe (James Turner), President between 1945 and 1960, and Sir Henry (now Lord) Plumb.

## LAST COUNTY SECRETARY KEN LEGGETT

Tributes were paid to the "backbone of the county's farming industry" when Ken Leggett retired as the last county secretary of NFU Norfolk in November 1991.

More than 300 farmers and growers attended a presentation evening, with the Leader of the Commons John (now Lord) MacGregor driving to Norwich to make the presentation.

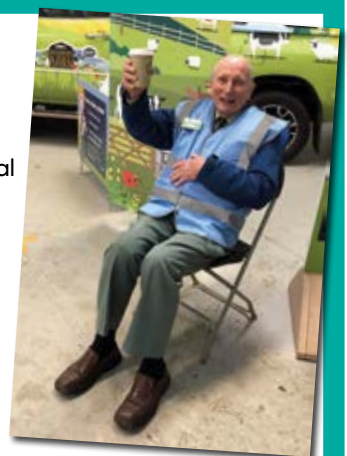
Mr MacGregor passed on the best wishes of the county's MPs and said Mr Leggett had made an enormous contribution to food and farming in Norfolk.

Born in Ipswich in January 1931, Mr Leggett started his long association with agriculture in 1947, as office boy and trainee salesman with Eastern Counties Farmers (ECF). He resumed his career with ECF after National Service in the Royal Navy, including 11 years as Senior Regional Manager for Norfolk.

After a period working for a government agency, the Central Council for Agricultural and Horticultural Co-operation, he joined NFU Norfolk as County Secretary in 1978, based at Agriculture House in Ber Street.

After leaving the NFU, Mr Leggett spent a year working as adviser to Gillian (now Baroness) Shephard, when she was Minister of Agriculture.

He is a former chairman of Stalham Farmers Club, former President of the Aylsham Show and member of Holt Farmers Club. In 2003, he received an MBE for services to agriculture in Norfolk.





# NFU Spitfire takes to the skies



**F**armers made a huge contribution to the war effort by increasing food production during the Second World War – but NFU Norfolk members went further by buying a fighter plane as well.

As the Battle of Britain raged, they launched NFU Norfolk's Spitfire Fund. The idea to start the fund came from the NFU's Loddon branch, following a suggestion from farmer Frederick Key. County Secretary Jim Wright said the cost would be about £5,000, or about one eighth of a penny per acre.

Money came in quickly. On one occasion in August 1940, £500 was collected by Norfolk auctioneer Clement Gaze at North Walsham pig market when it was decided to continue with the sale during an air raid. In September 1940, the NFU presented £5,000 for 'The Norfolk Farmer' Spitfire, Mark IIa P8138.

It was flown from Castle Bromwich on 15 May 1941 to Little Rissington, Gloucestershire, then to 234 Squadron at Church Fenton, Yorkshire. It went into service on 4 July at Middle Wallop, Hampshire and then the Supermarine Spitfire went to Perranporth, Cornwall, with 66 Squadron, flying sector patrols.

The aircraft seems to have more than its fair share of incidents, including hitting poles on Bodmin Moor during a practice 'rhubarb'. This is RAF slang for flying at times of low cloud or poor visibility and then looking for opportunity targets, such as railway locomotives, rolling stock or aircraft on the ground.

Records show it had at least four other accidents on landing and take-off over the next three years before it was finally scrapped on 28 June 1945.

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Let's go forward



# Sowing the seeds for farm environment schemes

Michael Pollitt reports on how pioneering work on grazing marshes in Norfolk paved the way for land management agreements across Europe

**M**ore than 40 years ago, the emerging conservation lobby and farmers were on a highly damaging collision course in a fierce and increasingly angry debate about the Norfolk Broads.

Against a backdrop of Europe's grain and butter mountains, milk and wine lakes, intervention and soaring CAP spending, there was little sign of compromise, as some took up entrenched positions.

Although 'Halvergate' came to a head in the late spring of 1984, there had been furious debate, locally, nationally and involving Europe for at least four or five years. In simple terms, it

boiled down to food production versus nature and wildlife.

With the opportunity to grow more profitable cereals on lowland grazing marshes, there was huge pressure from farmers to drain land and plough.

Farmer Robert More of Tunstall was one of those who had reluctantly decided to go down that route. At the time, rent for grazing marshes was down to £24 an acre, the same amount he was paying for drainage rates.

Speaking to *British Farmer & Grower* in 2008 he said: "We were very unwilling to do it because we love the landscape, love the place where we live. My family has been here

since 1705, so we're well entrenched here. It was with a heavy heart that we decided to go down that route.

"But the bottom line of farming is to stay in business and maximise your profits and my neighbours were draining marshes on their farms at the time."

However, an approach from the Broads Authority changed his mind and the future of the grazing marsh. The authority, then a relatively new kid on the block, worked with the Countryside Commission, the NFU and the CLA, at both county and national levels, as well as officials and ministers in the former Ministry of Agriculture and Department

## Hewitsons is proud to support NFU Norfolk on its centenary

For the past one hundred years NFU Norfolk has championed British Farming and provided its members with strong and professional representation and access to the highest quality advice. Hewitsons would like to congratulate NFU Norfolk on a century of support for agriculture.

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## “IN SIMPLE TERMS, IT BOILED DOWN TO FOOD PRODUCTION VERSUS NATURE AND WILDLIFE.”

of Environment, to evolve a peculiarly sensitive solution.

When, in March 1985, a large-scale pilot scheme was officially launched by East Anglian peer and Minister of State for Agriculture Lord Belstead, it was to evolve as a model for the rest of Europe.

With a typically bureaucratic title, the Broads Grazing Marshes Conservation Scheme, it was greeted with some scepticism, not least among conservation groups.

There was conflict – Friends of the Earth especially knew how to generate publicity, with slogans such as “Farmers paid for doing nothing.” But a carrot and stick strategy did eventually have a chance and the £50 per acre payment certainly sweetened the pot for the initial experimental or trial scheme.

Most importantly, a relatively light touch by officials on the ground enabled progress to be made and for consensus to be built.

When Environment Secretary Patrick Jenkin toured Halvergate on a grim November morning in 1984 in heavy, horizontal rain, in an aside, he confided that it was an ‘awful place’.

And in a farmers’ meeting at Acle that evening, some were absolutely furious that a ‘man from the Ministry’ would dictate when grass could be cut or weeds sprayed.

Despite loud outbursts and some heckling from some formidable Broads’ farmers, officials and farmers’ groups argued that a possible

Friends of the Earth protest to save the marshes



scheme should be given a chance.

Within months the overwhelming majority of some 8,400 acres, or 89% of the eligible area, had signed up. It was to curb the excesses of both sides and, within a year, it had been further expanded to allow others to join the scheme.

Mr More was full of praise for the individuals who pioneered the conservation scheme.

“The whole thing was about personalities, having the right people in the right place. They came to talk to farmers and were very articulate and persuasive,” he said.

The Norfolk model for the Broads became an integral strand of a new, essentially voluntary conservation policy, the Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESAs), formerly launched in

March 1987. The expanded Broads area became one of the first five ESAs.

It was a former Environment Minister and Suffolk Coastal MP, John Gummer, who was to persuade his European colleagues about the success of these practical, farm-based conservation policies.

As Minister of Agriculture in July 1992, when Britain held the rotating European presidency, he led a tour of the Breckland ESA. This home-grown policy initiative clearly impressed his European political colleagues and their advisers.

Today, Defra has again turned to Norfolk and Suffolk to implement a new pilot wildlife-friendly funding project for a new era of support for the industry. History does certainly seem to repeat itself.



# Norfolk estate goes back to the future

NFU Regional Communications Adviser Brian Finnerty talks to Tom Raynham, Chief Executive of the Raynham Estate, about its past, present and future

**T**he Raynham Estate in north Norfolk will forever have its place in agricultural history, thanks to Charles ‘Turnip’ Townshend.

His pioneering work promoting a four-course rotation of turnips, barley, clover and wheat in the 1700s helped spearhead Britain’s agricultural revolution.

Move forward 300 years and Tom Raynham, the current Viscount Raynham, is determined that the estate will remain at the forefront of agricultural development.

“Our family history has been about farming innovation, revolutionising the approach to agriculture, and that’s how I’d like us to continue,” he said.

“Turnip Townshend helped revolutionise farming by introducing turnips to the rotation, which are nitrogen-fixing. The cattle fed on the tops, over the winter, and the roots were

incorporated back into the soil to improve its structure.

“By the 1980s it was all about large-scale farming, taking out hedges and putting nitrogen into the soil to make things work and grow, but we’ve come full circle since then.

“Now it’s about keeping nitrogen in the soil so we can reduce our applications. It’s coming back to the older way of farming but with a modern, more technical approach.”

Tom became part of the business in 2010, after his grandfather passed away, but continued to work for Knight Frank on farm sales and agricultural investments until April 2016, when he took on the role of chief executive at Raynham.

He explained that 100 years ago, when NFU Norfolk was founded, it was predominately a tenanted estate.

“I think it would be amazing to wind the

clock back 100 years and see what things were like then. There would have been a real mixture of farming, from cattle through to arable farms, with very little mechanisation and much smaller fields,” he said.

“My grandfather had a farm manager, Frank Oldfield, who worked here for 47 years. When he arrived in the 1960s they were farming in-hand about 1,000 acres and gradually brought the tenanted land back under our control.

“We went through quite a change in our approach after my grandfather passed away. We downscaled enormously on machinery, in numbers, but scaled up on size. We have six employees on the farm side now, while 10 years ago we had 12 employees.

“If you look at the scale and change in farming, even in just the past 10 years, we’ve had quite a transformation. That’s come with



## FACTFILE: THE RAYNHAM ESTATE TODAY

### 5,000 ACRES

including 3,400 acres of cropping, 650 acres of grassland and 700 acres of woodland

### LIVESTOCK

160 breeding head of cattle, plus broiler chickens

### RENEWABLE ENERGY

anaerobic digester plus former airfield leased out for a solar farm

### PLUS

Property portfolio and events business, offering Raynham Hall as a venue



## “IT’S COMING BACK TO THE OLDER WAY OF FARMING BUT WITH A MODERN, MORE TECHNICAL APPROACH”

advances in technology. The whole farm has been GPS-mapped and all our machinery is guided by satellite. That will bring more changes and advances in the years to come.”

Tom said that, just like Turnip Townshend, the farm was taking an integrated approach. For example, muck from the broiler chickens goes back into the soil and all the feedstock for the AD plant comes from farm produce.

“This includes whole crop rye and we also bring the same tonnage of sugar beet pulp back from the factory at Wisington as we put into it as sugar beet,” said Tom.

“The digestate that comes out is spread on the land as fertiliser so there’s no wastage. I love that side of it. It’s good for our carbon footprint and also reduces the number of vehicle movements on the roads. The digestate is fantastic and we’re seeing the benefits already on our soil.”

Away from adapting farming practices, Tom is also looking at making the most of the farm buildings, to take advantage of the two million vehicles that pass the estate each year. He is looking at development options around brewing and distilling and bringing artisan food producers to the estate.



**A plan of one of the farm tenancies, East Raynham, in 1876. (Norfolk Record Office ref BL/T 13/62)**

“Diversification is so important. Crops are always vulnerable to the elements and global commodity prices. Factors completely out of our control can damage our farm income by 20% to 30% so you need to spread the risk and find businesses to even that out,” he said.

“I’m looking to major on diversification but without over-stretching ourselves, so we will be moving slowly. I have to ensure that, whatever we do, is here to stay and last and that whatever businesses we create have longevity and growth.

“Hopefully, my great grandchildren will be here in another 100 years, talking about farming at Raynham as NFU Norfolk celebrates its bicentenary!”

## FARMERS’ PRAISE FOR ‘OILSEEDS OLDFIELD’

The contribution to agriculture of the Raynham Estate’s long-serving estate manager, Frank Oldfield, was highlighted at a special event at the John Innes Centre in December 2011.

The *Eastern Daily Press* reported that more than 100 industry leaders attended to pay tribute to Frank Oldfield and the 47 years he spent running the Marquess of Townshend’s estate.

David Richardson said that Mr Oldfield had overseen the introduction of new crops including oilseed rape and vining peas, as well as the establishment of a poultry unit and a Friesian dairy herd.

“In Frank’s 47 years at Raynham, he has maintained and enhanced the legacies of Raynham. In view of the pioneering work on oilseeds, might it be appropriate to call him ‘Oilseeds Oldfield’ or, for his contribution to so many facets of agriculture, ‘Versatility Frank,’” he said.

The *EDP* said that, after Mr Richardson called for a standing ovation, Mr Oldfield was clearly shaken.

In reply, he said that he could not have achieved so much without the team of staff at Raynham.

## NEWS FROM THE ARCHIVES – 1980s

### 16 SEPTEMBER 1980

At least 33 Norfolk dairy farmers had taken the EEC’s golden handshake, worth up to £400 a cow to quit production, since January.

### 21 MARCH 1983

Norfolk had five of the top NFU posts. Mike Garrod was chairman of the sugar beet committee, William Donald became vice-chairman of potatoes in 1982, Tom Crane was vice-chairman of the pigs committee, John Place of Tunstead vice-chairman of soft fruit and Jim Papworth was vice-chairman of peas and processed vegetables.

### 17 MARCH 1984

Norfolk’s 15 branches raised £1,500 for the British Olympic Appeal to help the team at the Los Angeles Games, reported County Chairman Nick Guyer.

### 13 FEBRUARY 1985

Drastic spending cuts on East Coast sea defences would put lives at risk, warned Chairman Peter West. He told delegates in London that he remembered the floods of 1938, 1947 and 1953. More than 400 people died following the 1953 floods.

### 10 OCTOBER 1988

Massive cuts in research threatened farming’s future success, NFU Norfolk told Agriculture Minister and South Norfolk MP John MacGregor. John Hirst warned that field vegetables would suffer and Tom Crane predicted spending on pigs would be reduced by 80%.

### 13 DECEMBER 1988

Farmers in Norfolk rejected proposals to reform the county structure, which would bring the six eastern counties together.

### 3 APRIL 1989

NFU Norfolk thanked horticulture secretary John Newton for his enthusiastic and efficient years of service as he prepared to move to Ely as part of the regional reorganisation.

# Why Norfolk farming matters to David

David Faulkner reflects on his 38 years as NFU group secretary in East Norfolk

**D**avid Faulkner thought he would spend a couple of years working as an NFU group secretary in East Norfolk – and ended up staying for 38 years.

“The fact that I stayed for so long is testament to the farming community of East Norfolk,” said David, speaking ahead of his imminent retirement as senior group secretary at North Walsham. I’m going to miss all the people I have got to know over such a long period of time. I’m mindful that when the media talk about farming they talk about an industry, but I think about all those individual farming families who farm for a living.”

David is not from a farming background. After graduating with a degree in Development Studies at the University of East Anglia, he expected to forge a career working overseas for an NGO.

## “I THOUGHT I MIGHT DO THE JOB FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS BEFORE GOING ABROAD”

He had received help from the NFU in the South West when researching his dissertation on the impact of government policy in a less favoured area such as Bodmin Moor. So after graduating in 1979, he visited the NFU’s County Office in Norwich for assistance, as he felt he needed some practical farming experience.

County Secretary Ken Leggett put him in touch with a local farmer, Dan Whiteford of Foulden Hall near Stoke Ferry, who agreed to take him on for a year while he re-established his dairy unit.

“I spent a year effectively milking cows, which I really enjoyed, and also helping out on the arable side,” said David.

He decided to apply to join the NFU as a graduate trainee and, although he was unsuccessful, it was suggested he should consider becoming a group secretary.

He applied first for the assistant group secretary position for the Holsworthy branch



David Faulkner with Branch Chairman Richard Hirst

in Devon, where he was interviewed by a panel of farmers. He did not get the job but the experience was invaluable when he was interviewed for the assistant group secretary’s role at Acle NFU.

“I remember some names from the panel. It included County Chairman Paul Seligman, Ken Leggett, Bruce Deane, Pat Hood, who was the NFU Mutual local director, and Senior Group Secretary John Leach,” said David.

“When Ken said the members wanted to offer me the job I accepted and started in

October 1980. If I’m honest I thought I might do the job for a couple of years before going abroad.

“I didn’t really know what I was letting myself in for, but thought maybe farm adviser and a bit of insurance advice.

“I remember my first day, though, because there was an NFU Regional Conference for group secretaries at Owen Webb House in Cambridge and John Leach and other Norfolk-based group secretaries took me along.



“I recall that the state of farming was causing concern and at one point John stood up and pointed out to the top table that this was my first day and could they sound more positive!”

In 1980, there were three NFU branches – North Walsham, Stalham and Acle – which all held individual monthly meetings but these merged over time to form the East Norfolk Group.

David was appointed senior group secretary in 1992 and was joined by Christopher Deane as assistant group secretary. They have worked together as business partners for more than 25 years and were joined at the North Walsham office by James Taylor in 2014.

“The NFU is there for its members and in times of crisis the farmers turn out. I remember the introduction of Milk Quotas back in 1984 and the office in Ber Street was packed with Norfolk dairy farmers,” said David.

“Today there are so few dairy farmers left in Norfolk that there would be plenty of empty seats if there was another crisis. There have been other crisis meetings but that was one I remember.”

David said that one of the strengths of the NFU was its involvement at local, regional and national level on issues affecting the industry.

“Why Farming Matters to the Broads is a

good example of us working at a local and regional level. Branch members Nicholas Deane and Louis Baugh, along with myself, helped put it together with help from Ben Coates, a graduate trainee based at Newmarket,” he said.

“It was launched by Meurig Raymond when he was Deputy President and has been used to inform county and district councillors, as well as MPs.”

Another initiative David was involved with was a leaflet on the thorny issue of mud on the road, reminding farmers about their legal responsibilities to keep roads clear.

“We received funding from the Clan Trust, British Sugar and Ben Burgess and held meetings with the police and the County Council. The leaflet was launched at the Royal Norfolk Show and sent out to every Norfolk grower,” said David.

He will be succeeded as senior group secretary by Christopher Deane, with James Taylor taking over the assistant group secretary role.

“East Norfolk has its own unique landscape and there are so many different farming types within that,” said David.

“It’s a fascinating area, with some very interesting farming families out there, and it’s been a pleasure to have worked with them. I feel privileged to have had this job.”



David pictured outside the NFU marquee at the Royal Norfolk Show

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# Growing into the next century

What does the future hold for farming in Norfolk? We get the thoughts of five young farmers.



**Brian and Carla May Roberts, both 35, took over the tenancy of Coxhill Farm on the Burlingham Estate in October 2018. The 219 acre farm is part of the Norfolk County Farms Estate.**

“Both my grandfather and great grandfather had council farms when I was growing up and I spent more time on the farms than at school,” said Brian.

“My grandfather didn’t want me to go into farming

until I had learnt a trade so I became a plumbing and heating engineer.

“I did that for 12 years but never lost my farming ambition so would work on farms at weekends. Carla encouraged me to make it work as a full-time job and we bought our first tractor in 2012.”

Carla May said: “I was fairly pushy. As much as Brian wanted to do it, he needed to be pushed to make that first jump. His enthusiasm for farming is infectious and, although listening to him talk endlessly about it drove me crazy, it become my dream as well.”

Brian added: “I took on work with local farms and contractors and, whenever we had any spare money, we would invest it in machinery.

“We applied for two council farms in 2015 but didn’t get an interview, which was massively disappointing.

“For our application for Coxhill Farm we obtained professional advice, which was invaluable. I felt strongly that if we were invited for interview I could show them how passionate and determined I was to make it work and that’s what happened.

“We will be growing winter wheat and barley, sugar beet, vining peas and may rent out some land for potatoes. We will be keeping it simple and low risk to start with.

“Looking further ahead, we have four children and our two sons – Michael, 12, and Zechariah, 10 – are very keen to get involved in aquaponics. I hope we can develop that together as a project for them.

“I believe that there is a strong future for farming as long as you are driven and prepared to adapt”



**Will de Feyter, 26, works on his parent’s arable farm, has his own sheep flock and rears pigs on contract at East Ruston. He is Vice Chairman of Norfolk YFC.**

“I came home after finishing my degree at Harper Adams but there wasn’t enough work for me full-time on my parent’s farm. I looked into renting grazing to start my own livestock business. Since then I have also taken on two piggeries for contract rearing.

“The pigs are the most commercial so I am looking at growing that further. It has already grown from 150 to 1,000 animals.

“I have expanded the sheep flock too and now have 200 ewes. I sell the lamb direct through farmers markets and lamb boxes.

“One of my biggest challenges is the cost of renting grass. I rent grazing from five different landowners. Some are contracts, some are handshakes, but all are 12 month rolling agreements. I like to think I maintain a good relationship with them all.

“I see the future of farming being pigs and poultry. I have no expertise in poultry so it will be pigs for me. They are not reliant on subsidies and there are growing export markets outside of the EU.

“What is increasingly important as well is that we promote our industry and explain what we do and why. I’m concerned about the lack of knowledge some people have about farming – they believe everything they read on social media.

“We held a lambing day in March 2018 and 300 people visited the farm. We need the public on board with initiatives like this. They are our customers.”





Third-generation farmer Robert Hirst, 27, is farm manager at Hirst Farms, Ormesby, working alongside his father Richard Hirst and other family members.

"I've worked at the farm since 2014. Before that I studied at Harper

Adams, spent a year working on a farm in Suffolk and six months travelling in New Zealand and Australia.

"It was a traumatic start as, within three days of my return, we experienced a major fire that destroyed farm buildings and subsequently took the lives of in-lamb ewes.

"That was a difficult period but it did give us the opportunity to invest the insurance money in new sheds for a pig-rearing enterprise. We now contract-rear 2,000 pigs from three weeks to 20 weeks as part of a diverse business. We farm native breeds of cattle and sheep and grow crops including wheat, barley, sugar beet, peas and lettuces, as well as 25 acres of organic crops for G's. We also let land for potatoes.

"In addition, we have a horse livery, and our leisure attraction Hirstys Family Fun Park, that includes our maize maze. We are moving into direct sales with a butcher's shop.

"Labour is an issue for us. We struggle to recruit young talented people, as our business is so diverse. Brexit, and the Agriculture Bill, will bring new challenges. I'm convinced there will be a future for small family farms like ours but you can't rely solely on commodity prices as they fluctuate so much.

"We're providing other sources of income and protecting ourselves by developing a diverse farming operation. We'll never shy away from taking on a challenge."



Michael Pearson, 25, works for J.S. Means Ltd at Terrington St Clement and is a member of Terrington YFC.

"My passion for farming started with my stepfather, working on the farm which he manages.

"We lived alongside the farm and I used to watch him at work

on the tractors and wanted to have a go as well.

"He showed me all sorts of things, including how to set up and service equipment such as tractors, drills and combines.

"Farming has already changed in the time I've been involved. Technology is advancing at such a fast rate, which is exciting, but I still think it's important that people have these skills.

"When your driverless tractor breaks down, you need someone there who knows how to fix it. That's when proper training comes into play.

"I'm a full-time spray operator, carry out all the cereal drilling and I'm part of the cultivation team as well.

"Soil structure and management is very important and this is a key part of my role within the farm business.

"I'm optimistic for the future of farming in Norfolk. We will see more use of precision farming and new crop varieties coming through, some of them developed here in the county. We host wheat trials on this farm and it's really interesting to see how yields and quality can vary so much over a small area of land."

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Brown&Co are proud to support the NFU in its Centenary year

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# County Chairmen Roll of Honour

Thanks to all those who helped steer NFU Norfolk through its first 100 years.



During the NFU's national centenary celebrations in 2008, past county chairmen joined current Chairman Bob Young to celebrate at Easton College

## NFU NORFOLK COUNTY CHAIRMEN

W.J. Eagling	1919	G.E. Denney	1956	Tom Crane	1982
G.F. Boddy	1920	Hubert Sands	1957	Nick Guyer	1983
Henry Overman	1921 - 1926	Peter Savory	1958	Peter West	1984
James Alston (Uphall)	1927	Edwin de Grey Seaman	1959	David Ritchie	1985
R.G. Freeland	1928	Arthur Guy	1960	John H. Alston	1986
Alfred Lewis	1929 - 1930	Ernest Daniels	1961	Richard Kerkham	1987
E.R. Routh Clarke	1931	A.R. Askew	1962	Niels de la Cour	1988
J.B. Simpson	1932	W.L.J. Burt	1963	Dick Broughton	1989 - 1990
Stanley Stimpson	1933	William Paterson	1964	William Brigham	1991
Charles Joice	1934	Alfred Jones	1965	John Place	1992
Alfred Lewis	1935	John Howard	1966	Charles Wharton	1993
B. Moore	1936	Colin Coe	1967	Michael Dewing	1994
R.W. Kidner	1937	John Barber	1968	Nigel Wright	1995 - 1996
A.F. Culham	1938	Humphrey Back	1969	Stuart Agnew	1997
James Alston (Uphall)	1939 - 1942	Mike Garrod	1970	Robert Steven	1998 - 1999
Alfred Lewis	1943 - 1944	T.H. Morrish	1971	Gavin Alston	2000
R.W. Kidner	1945	Harry Holden	1972	Richard Hirst	2001
R.R. Bennett	1946	Pat Hood	1973	Tony Williams	2002 - 2003
G. Alexander	1947 - 1948	Dick Hill	1974	Nic Velzeboer	2004
James Alston (Sco Ruston)	1949	Robin Kerkham	1975	George Harcourt	2005 - 2006
R.C. Sherar	1950	Peter Alexander	1976	Bob Young	2007 - 2008
E. Cave	1951	William Donald	1977	Christine Hill	2009 - 2010
J.L. Brighton	1952	Bill Perowne	1978	Francis Ulrych	2011 - 2012
M.W.A. Harris	1953	Brian Borthwick	1979	Ken Proctor	2013 - 2014
James Alston (Calthorpe)	1954	Paul Seligman	1980	Thomas Love	2015 - 2016
R.R. Bennett	1955	Willy Alston	1981	Tony Bambridge	2017 - 2018



# NFU Norfolk Centenary Celebrations

Here's how members can join in the celebrations during NFU Norfolk's centenary year

## 3 DECEMBER 2018

### South Norfolk branch

#### Christmas drinks and canapes evening

Kick off the centenary celebrations in style with a special event organised by South Norfolk NFU branch at Lyng Farm, Garboldisham, by kind permission of the Gooderham family. This Christmas drinks and canapes evening will include food made from Norfolk produce, as well as locally-sourced beer.

Contact [Joanna Johnson or Maria Jones](#) on 01379 651800

## 8 MAY

### Norwich branch

#### Norwich Cathedral tour, reception and service

The Dean has kindly invited members to attend the evensong, which is held in the Cathedral starting at 5.30pm. During the service, the Dean will give thanks to the farming community and recognise the centenary of NFU Norfolk. From here, members will be treated to various tours around the Cathedral before a reception in the Weston Room.

Contact [Nicky Savage](#) on 01603 304949

## 21 MAY

### Mid-Norfolk and Watton branches

#### Houghton Hall farm tour, deer park, gardens and afternoon tea

We're celebrating 100 years of NFU Norfolk, as Houghton Estate is developing a sustainable farming system for the next 100 years. It has a diverse organic farming operation

including a new Jersey-cow dairy herd, combinable crops, beef, sheep, and a deer park. Land is also rented out for organic vegetables, pigs and chickens. A farm tour will be followed by afternoon tea and the opportunity to visit the Formal Gardens at Houghton Hall, all by kind permission of Lord Cholmondeley.

Contact [Amy Walker](#) 01603 810310

## 1 JUNE

### East Norfolk branch

#### Dinner with speaker, The Boathouse, Ormesby

The East Norfolk branch of the NFU is celebrating the Norfolk Centenary by holding a dinner at the Boat House at Ormesby, in the heart of the Norfolk Broads. NFU Deputy President Guy Smith has kindly agreed to speak. Invitations will be sent out in early 2019 and members will be invited to arrange tables of 10. The event will raise money for RABI, the Air Ambulance and Nelson's Journey.

Contact [Christopher Deane](#) on 01692 402929

## 26 AND 27 JUNE

### NFU at the Royal Norfolk Show

We're joining forces with Norfolk YFC at the Royal Norfolk Show to mark two special celebrations – the centenary of NFU Norfolk and the 75th anniversary of NYFC. Planning is under way for a pageant in the Grand Ring which will showcase the past, present and the future of farming in the county.

## AUTUMN (date tbc)

### North Norfolk branch

#### Raynham Estate, visit and afternoon reception in the grounds

Members will have the chance to visit Raynham Estate, where 'Turnip' Townshend introduced a new type of crop rotation that revolutionised agriculture. The farm operation includes arable cropping, a beef herd, a broiler business, an anaerobic digester and land rented out for a solar farm. Invitations will follow with more information.

Contact [Julie Frost](#) on 01263 712306

## 1 NOVEMBER

### NFU Norfolk annual county meeting

#### John Innes Centre, Norwich

Join us for this very special annual county meeting, marking the centenary of NFU Norfolk. The event will start with a buffet lunch of locally-sourced produce before the annual county meeting, which begins at 2pm. Guests at this high profile event will include past officeholders and staff of the NFU in Norfolk, MPs and representatives from Norfolk businesses and organisations.

More information is available from [John Newton](#) on 01638 672123

## 11 DECEMBER

### West Norfolk branch

#### Festive Soiree, the Red Barn, Runcton Holme

This event will bring together the West Norfolk branches of Downham Market & Southery and King's Lynn & Swaffham. It will be held in the beautiful medieval tithe barn, lovingly restored by the Rockcliffe family. Come along and enjoy food sourced from a host of local producers and festive entertainment provided by a brass band.

Contact [Patrick Verrell](#) on 01760 724888

**Branch events are open to all NFU Norfolk members. Please call the local office for more information and to book your place.**



Mid Norfolk and Watton branches are visiting Houghton Hall





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The NFU has expertise that a small but rapidly growing and changing business just doesn't have.

It's offered a real helping hand to us. The local office is fantastic for information and support and NFU CallFirst has provided guidance on everything from BPS to employment issues.

It's expert advice at the end of the phone.

**John and Ellie Savory**  
NFU members

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To join or find out more contact NFU CallFirst on 0370 428 1401  
or go to [nfuonline.com/membership](https://nfuonline.com/membership)

The NFU. We're here for you now and into the next 100 years.

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