

## Sell-out dinner success

A sell-out annual dinner at the Lodge, Salhouse, was a huge success as Stalham Farmers' Club's retiring chairman William Sands thanked members and guests for a highly successful year.

And there was further reason for celebrations on Wednesday, March 13. It was announced that John McLeod, of Milligen McLeod Contracting had won the inter-club competition for the best sample of malting barley.

His farm manager David Pickering, who had entered a sample of Maris Otter, also won the award for best sample of wheat. The Holt entry of Laureate had been entered by Melton Harrold. Sadly, Mr McLeod, who was celebrating his 80th birthday that day, couldn't be present.

The prize cards and trophies were presented by Mark Nicholas, managing director of the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association, who highlighted the potential for groups like the Stalham Farmers' Club to play a role in promoting opportunities in food, farming and the countryside. He said that the Norfolk showground has now become a hub or rural centre for a range of groups including the Norfolk Federation of Young Farmers' Club, the Norfolk Farm Machinery Club and the Norfolk-based mental health awareness charity, YANA (You Are Not Alone).

In the past four years, the RNAA has funded and enthusiastically promoted a series of initiatives to promote the importance of food and farming to the wider community by launching the Food and Farming Discovery Trust. And, it was vital to get over the message that the Norfolk showground was not just home to a two-day Royal Norfolk Show but actively promoting food and farming. It was planned to get spades in the ground, possibly later this autumn, for the new Norfolk Food Hall on the showground. With about two-thirds of funding secured for the £3.25m project, there was an opportunity for sponsors and supporters to help fund this significant investment, said Mr Nicholas.

Earlier the chairman William Sands was delighted to welcome 115 members and guests to the Lodge, Salhouse and he asked the club's president, George Gay, to say the Grace. On the top table, he was joined by Richard Brooks, president of Holt & District Farmers' Club, and the chairman, Martin Jensen, and a presenter of BBC Radio 4's Farming Today programme, Anna Hill.

It was especially pleasing as he stood down at the end of his two-year term as chairman that there were twice as many at the annual dinner than the previous year. The three-course meal has been excellent and when he thanked George Colchester and his team at the Lodge, there was loud applause from the entire company.

Mr Sands said another highlight had been hosting the annual farm walk with the East Norfolk branch of the National Farmers' Union at the family's Brumstead farm. It was probably the most perfect summer's evening when more than 200 members and guests had been taken on a tour to see a range of crops including mustard being grown for Colman's of Norwich.

He also thanked the competition judges – Robin Baines (potatoes), Chris Borrett (Adams & Howling) for the grain and Sam Summers (of British Sugar) for the best two-acre and whole beet crop.

After the wonderful summer farm walk, the autumn and winter months had provided especially challenging. He noted that Alistair Wright, who had continued his late father

Nigel's rainfall recording at Church Farm, Stalham, had logged an astonishing 1047.4 mm last year – the wettest since 1987 and smashing the 32-year average of 646mm. And, of course, the deluge has continued into February with more than 124mm recorded. It was fair to say that everyone – farmers, consumers and the community was heartily fed up with the deluge.

When the trophies and prize cards were presented Mr Sands was runner-up in two competitions – for best whole crop of sugar beet and in the wheat cup with a sample of Dawsum. He then presented the chairman's gavel to his successor Jonathan Pye, who thanked him and also the company for their support and to the Lodge for a great annual dinner.

The secretary, Michael Pollitt, also thanked Mary Beck for her calligraphy skills over the past 30 years with the club's prize cards.

### **Crop competition trophy results:**

Congratulations to the 2023 winners of Stalham Farmers' Club's crop competitions. The inter-club barley championship was won by Milligen McLeod Contracting, of East Ruston, with a sample of Maris Otter.

It was judged the pick of the crop by Rebecca Gee, of the Crisp Malting Group against a sample of Laureate, entered by Melton Harrold, of Holt & District Farmers' Club.

The grain competition entries were judged by Chris Borrrett, of Adams & Howling.

Barley - 1 Milligen McLeod (Maris Otter); 2 CN Beck & Son (Diablo); 3 John Key (Maris Otter).

Wheat - 1 Milligen McLeod (Redrum); 2 HBS Farms (Dawsum); 3 CN Beck & Son (Insitor).

Sugar beet, judged by Sam Summers of British Sugar.

Best two-acre - 1 Walcott Farms; 2 Milligen McLeod (Waxham); 3 CN Beck & Son.

Whole crop - 1 Walcott Farms; 2 HBS Farms; 3 Milligen McLeod.

Cantley Cup for best campaign performance (to be announced later).

Potato Cup, judged by Robin Baines.

1 LF Papworth (Galante); 2 Walcott Farms (Innovator); 3 LF Papworth (Alexandra) and James Harrison (Ivory Russet).

Cantley Cup (to be announced later).