

A move to Wroxham Barns for the opening meeting of Stalham Farmers' Club's autumn season was welcomed by almost 30 members.

Will Sands, chairman said that very generous portions had been served at supper for 17 members, guests and the speaker, Peter Crawley, of the Honingham-based office of Pre-Construct Archaeology. He also mentioned that the family's East Norfolk farm at Brunstead had received one-third of the average annual rainfall in just three weeks – with some 200mm recorded.

The October meeting – a visit to Condimentum's mustard mill and fresh mint processing plant at Easton – had been a great success as more than 20 members were taken on a tour of the factory. One Stalham member, David Bond, was also one of the tour guides.

Apologies – Chris Borrett, Christopher Deane, Graham Duncanson, Sarah Ellero and Greg Smith.

Secretary's report – An updated members' email list was close to being finalised. Mr Sands again urged members, who had not received club communications to let the secretary or himself know. Further, members were reminded that the club's annual subscription, £20 was payable from January 1. There were still some members, who had not updated their payments.

Crop competitions – Entries for the potato cup had been judged, thanks to Robin Baines. The whole crop sugar beet and best two-acre competitions would be judged as soon as possible and a number of entries had been received. Grain competitions – Samples should be brought to the next meeting on Wednesday, December 6 or could be left by permission of Neal Sands at the Brunstead works or delivered to Chris Borrett at Adams & Howling.

Mr Sands introduced the speaker, Peter Crawley, who was an archaeologist now based at Honingham. He had graduated in 1993 and for then 15 years, between 2003 and 2018 had worked for the Norfolk Archaeology Unit. He gave an insight into the various techniques used for survey and exploratory work using a combination of aerial, drone and also field-mapping. Although mainly desk-based, he still managed to get out into the field and had taken part in the former Little Plumstead Hospital site investigation between 2017 and 2018. This had led to the discovery of probably the largest Roman grain drying operation, involving a total 28 ovens – operating probably between 75 and 215AD. Grain from at least three types had been found – emmer, spelt, rye and there were signs that some grains had been malted.

Mr Crawley said that recording and logging finds was crucial. While often the archaeological investigations were being carried out on a tight timescale ahead of building and development, there had been some intriguing discoveries including a possible henge near Banham – possibly one of only 24 in the UK. Other examples found ahead of building work included another Roman grain drier on part of Nova Scotia Farm, Caister. He was thanked by Ian Willetts.

A new member Vera Gacic, an agronomist from Blofield, was welcomed.

The date of the next meeting – Wednesday, December 6 when Anna Hill, of BBC Radio 4's Farming Today and former presenter of On Your Farm, will be speaking. All members and guests welcome to attend supper beforehand but it must be booked with the secretary – michaelbpollitt@btinternet.com or 01603 486997.