

Stalham Farmers Annual Dinner 15th March 2023

Special presentation for six decades of support –

A special presentation was made to a former chairman for an outstanding attendance record spanning six decades.

The chairman's award was made to Ken Leggett by guest speaker Gavin Lane, vice-president of the Country Land and Business Association, at the club's annual dinner at North Walsham Rugby Club.

In making the announcement, the chairman Will Sands said that Ken had been elected to the club in 1965 and had been a regular attender for the past 58 years.



He gave him a bottle of red wine as a small token of the club's appreciation for his support. In a brief address, Mr Sands spoke of the "rollercoaster" challenges of farming in 2022 – a surge in inflation, soaring record temperatures and the prolonged drought. After Russia's invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022 – he had watched, almost bemused, as wheat prices hit £250, then £300 and £350 per tonne. It had been quite a year, he said, which was a considerable under-statement.

The club also welcomed two members of Holt & District Farmers' Club – the president Richard Brooks and the current chairman Pat Cubitt – as well as west Norfolk farmer Mr Lane – as almost 70 members and guests enjoyed a three-course meal.

As vice-president of the CLA, Mr Lane highlighted the importance of making the voice of farming and rural business heard by government. However, he recognised that the agricultural industry and land managers had to rise to the challenge of enhancing the natural environment. He suggested that the direction of future funding – public money for public goods – was a clear, government priority. For the present and indeed into the future, support for domestic food production did not feature in Whitehall’s policy thinking.

Mr Lane, who won the Royal Norfolk Agricultural Association’s Nuffield scholarship in 2003 to study the opportunities for farm shops, also spoke of the mental health challenges in the wider farming community. The importance of groups like the Stalham Farmers’ Club could not be over-estimated in terms of encouraging mental health wellbeing and concern.

Outstanding sample retain supreme barley championship for Stalham -

An outstanding sample of a spring variety clinched Norfolk’s top malting barley title for Stalham Farmers’ Club for the second year in a row.

John McLeod, of Old Manor Farm, East Ruston, won the supreme championship in the annual tussle for honours against Holt & District Farmers’ Club. The sample of Lucent, grown by farm manager David Pickering, was placed by Bob King, retiring commercial director of Crisp Malting Group, ahead of the entry from William Mack, of Hempstead Hall, of the winter variety, Craft.



Stalham's success was announced at the club's annual dinner at North Walsham Rugby Club, where the awards were presented by west Norfolk farmer Gavin Lane, vice-president of the Country Land and Business Association.

It was a night of triumph for Mr McLeod's team, who also won the wheat trophy with a sample of Gleam. The president, George Gay, of Mautby Farms, was runner-up with the same variety.

Milligen McLeod's team picked up the trophy for best crop of sugar beet ahead of neighbours, Edward de Feyter, of the CH Callow partnership.

The best two-acre trophy was awarded to former club president, Thomas Love, of Walcott Farms, ahead of Robert Cook, of Ingham. The Cantley Cup, first presented in 1928, for best overall performance in the last beet campaign, was won by Walcott Farms with Alan Beck, of Brunstead, runner-up, and Cubitt Siely in third place.

The Potato Cup's winner was a crop of Ivory Russet, grown by James Harrison, at Neatishead. Tim Papworth was runner-up.



Mr Lane, who farms about 1,200 acres in west Norfolk, spoke of the challenges facing the agricultural industry and rural businesses in promoting a positive message to all tiers of government. He said that farmers and land managers were keen to play a leading role in "greening" the countryside but said that it was often extremely difficult to highlight policies to encourage food production.

The Country Land and Business Association represented 27,000 members, including about half who farmed less than 250 acres.

He was thanked by the vice-chairman, Jon Pye, and given a silk tie depicting the club's Stalham hoe.

The competition judges – Robin Baines (potato), Sam Summers (sugar beet) and Chris Borrett (wheat and barley) were also thanked.