

## Sixty years of drainage celebrated by the Board

WHEN the 60th anniversary of Louth/Drainage Board was celebrated at a dinner at the Masons Arms Hotel, Louth, on Friday, the chairman, Mr Phillip Shucksmith, drew timely attention to "the Class of 1938 at Louth Boys' Grammar School", which included four boys, present that evening, who had become closely connected with the Board.

Mr Shucksmith, of Alvingham, was one of the four. He has been a member of the Board since 1974, has been chairman since 1992, and previously held that office 1982-84.

First, he spoke of Charles Bocoek, of Donna Nook, "the first 11+ pupil from Grainthorpe to attend King Edward VI school".

After war service in the RAF, and farm and dairy work, Mr. Bocoek became a drainage officer for the Ministry of Agriculture, overseeing the drainage of thousands of acres in north Lincolnshire, the laying of millions of clay pipes, and miles of plastic piping.

On retirement, the Drainage Board employed him for his practical knowledge.

Lawrence Reed, the second of the four, saw service in the RAF. He joined the

Board and in 1966 became foreman. Ten years later he was appointed works manager retiring in 1990. Mr Reed and his wife are about to move from their South Somercotes home to Louth.

The third boy, Norman Borrill, started farming in the late 1940s at South Cockerington Grange, taking over from his father, who was an original member of the Board.

"For those who know it, Howdales is 'man's land', and Norman farmed it with some difficulty at times. The area flooded regularly in heavy rain, with the dykes over-topping."

Mr Borrill joined the Board in 1962, was chairman 1980-82, and retired this year.

Mr J R Elkington, Clerk to the Board, 1983-1992, proposed a toast to the Board. He gave a comprehensive account of its history, and of problems overcome. Mr Ralph Needham, of Grimoldby, vice-chairman, responded.

The Louth, Alford and Skegness Drainage Boards joined as an administrative consortium in 1989. Their direct labour departments became one in 1994. Total amalgamation of the three Boards is now being negotiated.

**Philip Henry Shucksmith: retirement speech (part of)  
from Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board (L.M.D.B.) in 2001**

Philip was a member of the Louth Drainage Board and its successors from 1980-2001, being chairman for most of the 1990s.

On the occasion of his retirement, he thanked board members for their kind remarks and thanks for his service. Philip continued, saying:

“This afternoon, we have had a comprehensive tour of the southern half of our Drainage Board District; both interesting and informative. I like to believe that the seeds of this Lindsey Marsh Drainage Board (L.M.D.B.) were sown by the former Louth Drainage Board (D.B.). My colleague, Norman Borrill, persuaded Jim Elkington to become joint clerk with Alford in the early 1980s. Joint administration followed, and then Skegness D.B. joined us. The financial side was a sticky problem as Louth had always been the poor cousin in the Lincolnshire A.D.A. However, with some give and take, and possibly gentle pressure, this was solved and the L.M.D.B. emerged with equal rating, thanks to the Alford and Skegness Board members and ratepayers. The board, as you see, is doing a good job and hopefully the powers that be are likewise persuaded. Time will tell.

May I thank the officers and staff at Manby for their courtesy and kindness over the years. It has been a pleasure to give my time to work for the D.B.”

As chairman for most of the 1990s, he was actively involved in the progression towards a larger and more efficient organisation, which led to improvements in finance, drainage and reducing flooding in times of crises.

# Board down the drain after 62 years

IT WAS, as Ralph Needham said, the end of Chapter One, and the start of Chapter Two.

After 62 years, Louth Drainage Board is no more. Its future lies with the Alford and Skegness boards in the new Lindsey Marsh Drainage Consortium. The Louth board's final meeting at the Brackenborough Arms Hotel on Wednesday preceded lunch at which generous tributes were paid to its work since 1934, and personally to the chairman for the last 10 years, Phillip Shucksmith, of Alvingham. He has been a board member since 1974.

Mr Shucksmith spoke of "this rather unique occasion. It can hardly be described as a celebration. However, it is fitting to mark this milestone."

"There are two serving past chairmen. Norman Borrill, with us today, who no doubt sees this (the amalgamation) as something he helped to initiate. Doug Graham, who was chairman 1986-88, is unable to be present, but sends his best wishes."

"Two past works managers, Laurence Reed and Brian Wilson, both marshmen, are here. Their knowledge was so invaluable in drainage."

"Today agriculture is not as financially rewarding as it has been" he remarked, paying tribute to ratepayers who paid their drainage rates on demand "an indication of how highly they regard the work of the board, and of the truism 'You can't farm on water.'"

He thanked all members of the board, and the staff, and had a word for members of the new consortium "It will require effort and dedication to make it successful. It will be an interesting and challenging event in the history of land drainage."

Footnote: The foundation of all land drainage law is accepted as found in the Statute of Sewers, passed in 1531 in the reign of Henry VIII. The Crown appointed Commissioners who were the administrators to effect protection against floods, and the drainage of the land.

As owners and occupiers of land, the Commissioners acted in Lincolnshire through Courts of Sewers, and the old Courts of Sewers for Alford, Spilsby, Louth and Grimsby, set the pattern of drainage in the East Lindsey Marsh, and the north east of Lincolnshire from the 16th century onwards.

# Praise for board's work



End of an era for Louth Drainage board members as they meet for last time at the Brackenborough Arms Hotel.

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