

## JOHN KERR MBE (G53-56)

He was born on 19 November 1943.

From a farming family, he attended Writtle Agricultural College after leaving Framlingham.

He was Chairman of the Farmers' Club in London and set up one of Suffolk's most popular family attractions, Easton Farm Park. In 2006 he was elected President of the Suffolk Show, in its 175<sup>th</sup> year. The picture below was taken of John greeting the Duke of Gloucester at the 2006 show.



He was awarded the MBE in Summer 1986.

He also served as High Sheriff and Deputy Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk and Vice-Chairman of the Woodbridge Magistrates bench. He is also a Governor of the College.

Apart from farming, his other great passion is Ipswich Town Football Club, where he has been a director since 1983 (taking over from his father) and was Chairman from 1991 to 1995. The following is a picture of John (on the left) in 1992, with the then Ipswich Town Manager John Lyall.



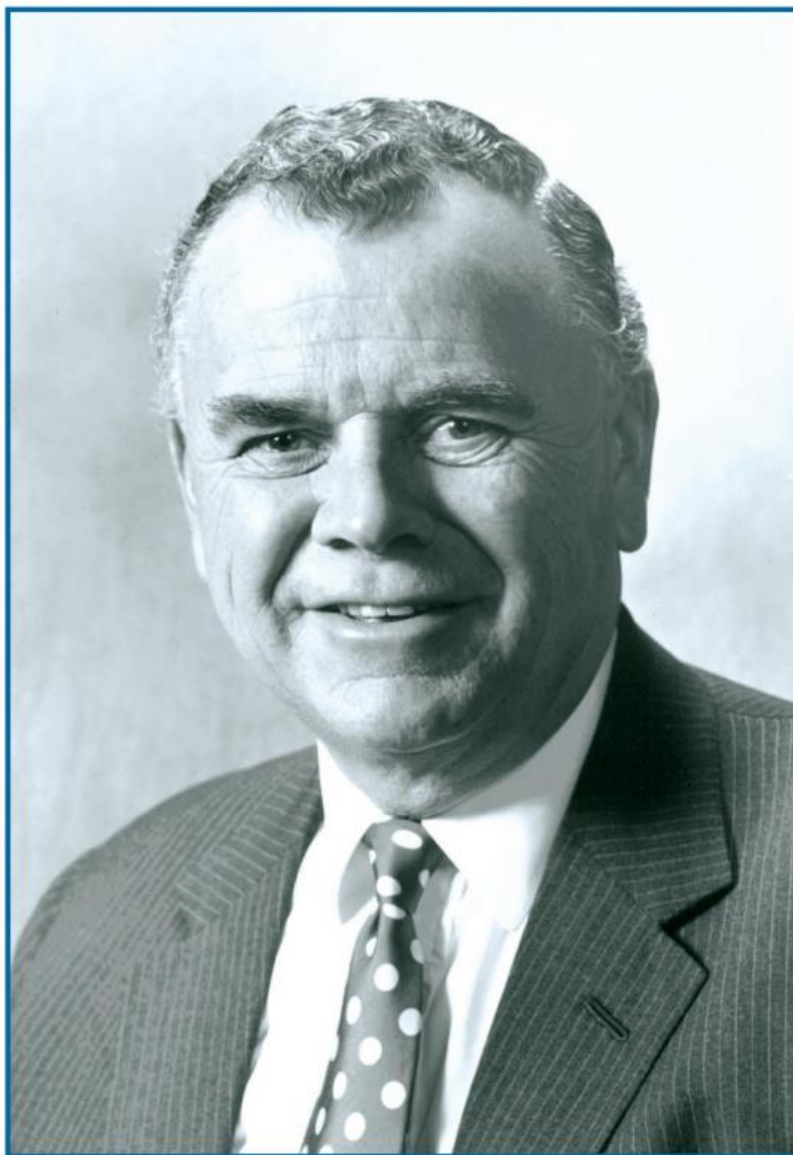
In the September 2002, he was presented with an Honorary Doctorate Degree by Writtle Agricultural College. The citation contained the following :-

".... John Kerr was a student at Writtle College in the 1960's and now farms 7,000 acres in Suffolk where he is Deputy Lieutenant of the County. John Kerr was High Sheriff of Suffolk in 1995 and has been the Honorary Director of the Suffolk County Show. John Kerr has held many official positions both regionally and nationally including that of Chairman of Ipswich Town Football Club.

"In recognition of his services to the agricultural industry, it gives Writtle College much pleasure in conferring on John Kerr an Honorary Doctorate of the University of Essex."

He died on 15 March 2023 aged 83.

The following is an obituary from The Farmers Club, of which he was President and Club Chairman in 1994 and served on their committees for over 20 years.



# John Kerr MBE

November 1939 – March 2023

## CLUB CHAIRMAN 1994

John Kerr was born in Suffolk of Scottish parents, William and Mary Kerr, in 1939. His parents had migrated from New Cumnock in Ayrshire in 1938 to start farming in East Anglia with a herd of Ayrshire cows. He was brought up in Letheringham near Market Wickham and was educated at Framlingham College and later at Writtle Agricultural College and went on to farm a dairy herd of some 220 head of cattle, as well as turkeys and also a number of arable crops including potatoes, peas, sugar beet and cereals over 7,000 acres, one might say a typical East Anglian mixed farming enterprise. A Suffolk man through and through, John became a pillar of Suffolk life immersing himself in the life of the County in many different areas. He was a very active member of the Suffolk Agricultural Association and was Suffolk Show Director between 1982-84 (a position emulated by his son Bruce in 2022) and became President in 2006, the year the show was visited by the Duke of Gloucester, however, he had a key part to play in the Association's survival and helped save the organisation by introducing a number of key reforms, and at one stage helping to financially support the Suffolk Show. His trademark attention to detail, knowledge of his subject and wise leadership, helped guide the Association during a very difficult time and laid the foundations for future success.

His interests and outreach went beyond the pure farming sphere and testament to him being a true servant and citizen of Suffolk, he served the county as both a Deputy Lieutenant and Vice Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk as well as being Chairman of Easton Parish council, the Framlingham and Woodbridge Horse

Shows and of the Woodbridge Bench of Magistrates. Through most of these offices, John helped to develop a much wider understanding of farming and food production in the County. In this respect, perhaps one of the most important features of his work was the decision to open up his farm to the public, known as Easton Farm Park. The Park had a wide range of animals and exhibits including a stud of 14 Suffolk Punch heavy horses. It attracted and continues to do so, many visitors in the summer months and provides educational facilities for schools within the area. Other interests saw him act as a Non-Executive Director of Booker Farming and of a large private farming company in North West England. John Kerr was awarded the MBE for services to Agriculture in 1986.

In 1994, after serving on several Committees within The Farmers Club, John Kerr became President and Club Chairman of The Club. Based in London, but with the plethora of experience in farming and management, John brought a balanced view of farming from right across the country. He embraced the role and had an extremely successful year, with the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture, the Rt Hon Gillian Shephard addressing The Club membership, his first guest of the year. The U30s were as active as ever, the new Forty Room (now The Club Room) was opened and nearly every debate had at its core the CAP and its effects on farming and pricing and also, much debate around planning for the next food crisis – ahead of its time! The annual Dinner and dance at Grosvenor House were addressed by Mr Paul Heiney, Farming columnist for the Times and the then, Bishop of Chelmsford, Rt Revd John Waive.

Following his year as Club Chairman, John sat as a Trustee of The Farmers Club Charitable Trust, becoming its Chairman a short time later. Although a Club member for over 50 years, John devoted over 21 years of that membership to its service on Committees, as Chairman and as a Trustee and Chairman of The Farmers Club Charitable Trust – a true Club man.

One of the most high profile associations with which John became involved, was with Ipswich Town Football Club. His father had been a Director of the Football Club but in 1991, John became its Chairman at what was a golden age for Ipswich Town FC which included them being one of the founder members of the Premier League after winning the Second Division title in the preceding season. He was the first chairman from outside the Cobbold family to take the role. After 6 seasons in Division 2, he led Ipswich Town on a journey that made them a force in the top flight again. His successor in 1995, David Sheepshanks, commented, that John had laid down the foundations that made the football club ready for the modern game and persuaded him to remain on the board to make use of his invaluable experience.

In 2002, he was presented with an Honorary Degree by Writtle Agricultural College which acknowledged the key part he had played across the many and varied aspects of life in Suffolk. A gentleman in every respect and a person who became fully engaged with whatever he took on, he was a dedicated and proud family man who will leave a large vacuum in the lives of his family, wife Jill and children Laura, Bruce, Fiona and Alastair.