



Surrey Beekeepers Association AGM 5th December 2020 **Chairman's Report**

What an extraordinary year! Who would have thought that we would go an entire season without seeing each other face to face. Thank goodness for Zoom.

The most significant change of the year for all divisions has been the seamless move to technology to support members and keep up communication throughout the season. Beginners courses were resumed when corona virus guidance eased and members virtual meetings were organised by all. Some divisions were quicker than others to embrace the virtual world but it didn't take long to get everyone on board! Virtual speakers' programmes were planned by many divisions. All divisions continued to ensure their bees were well cared for, as well as their members. The rewards have been splendid honey harvests and Honey Shows. Despite lockdown and social distancing, divisions have found customers for their honey through the creative use of social media. There has been resilient and flexible leadership across all divisions with plans in place to ensure members and bees have not missed out. You have all been amazing.

As usual your Surrey BKA Council members met four times during the year but remotely by Zoom.

Apologies to old hands who know the following but for the benefit of our newer members, SBKA is a registered charity. Each of the eight Surrey Divisions is asked to provide a Trustee. In addition, the Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman are also Trustees. Trustees are proposed by their divisions and elected at the AGM. Each Division also elects a Representative whose job is to put forward the views of his or her Division and report back on what happens in each Council meeting. Representatives are elected at Divisional AGM's. Once again it is a testament to good management by all our Divisions that I can't think of any contentious issues relating to our management in the past year.

My thanks to all the Trustees and Divisional Representatives who give so freely of their time to make our organisation such a success.

We have a number of trustee and representative changes at our 2020 AGM.

Marilynne Bainbridge is standing down as Chair of Guildford BKA and as Guildford's representative on the Council. Jonathan Brookhouse will become the new Guildford Chair and Council representative. Geoff Redwood is standing down as Farnham BKA's Council representative. Chris Rushton is taking his place. Thank you Marilynne and Geoff for the tremendous amount of work you have done for your divisions and the great contribution you have made to the SBKA Council. A warm welcome to Jonathan and Chris.

Marion Cooper and Jane Hunter are swapping roles at Weybridge. Jane is proposed as the Weybridge Trustee and Marion will become their Representative.

Jonathan Brookhouse, founder of our Surrey BKA Asian Hornet team, has decided to stand down from this role. Thank you Jonathan for all your work on this project. Jim Wynn will now be leading the Surrey BKA AHAT team. Jim is an active member of our AHAT team and I know he will do a great job

leading the team from now on. This year Jim helped Surrey BKA into the 21st century by setting up and guiding us through the technicalities of Zoom meetings.

It was a shock to learn of the sudden death of Croydon member Mark Stott a few months ago. Mark was a very active member of Croydon Division holding many roles including chairman until a few years ago. He was a founder member of the SBKA Education Sub-committee and was a valued member of the SBKA Council for many years. Due to Covid restrictions only a small number of people could attend Mark's funeral. SBKA was represented by Celia Perry. Our thoughts are with Mark's family and the members of Croydon Division.

Congratulations to the many divisions who managed to develop new projects despite Covid 19 restrictions. These are highlighted in the divisional reports published on the Surrey BKA website.

This year's British Beekeepers Association (BBKA) Annual Delegates Meeting (ADM) is the subject of a separate report.

Last year I reported that we had some issues regarding the correct application of Gift Aid and we were still in discussion with HMRC about this as it appears that we can no longer claim gift aid on all of our subscriptions. John Bainbridge kindly took on this challenge. He has been seeking professional advice on our behalf but I'm sorry to say that at the time of writing we still await that advice. This is not for the want of trying by both John and myself. All I can say is that we are on the case and will report via the SBKA Council as soon as we have news. I hope that between publishing this report and our AGM there will be a development. We are all aware that time is running out before we will start to lose some of our GiftAid benefit.

Our webmaster Martin Major stood down this year after a number of years in the job. Martin has done a great job maintaining the county website. It's a difficult balance as it needs to be user friendly for SBKA members and for the public but not a replacement for all the excellent divisional websites. Martin has maintained a careful balance with the content of the site. Thank you Martin for doing such a good job for us. I'm delighted to welcome Guildford member Colin Marshall who has kindly agreed to take on the role.

I think the lockdown has made us all think about our priorities and how we can help others. With this in mind, Surrey BKA trustees decided to use some of our reserves to support subsistence beekeepers in the poorest parts of the world. We set aside £5,000 which was shared equally between Bees Abroad and Bees for Development.

I'm always a little nervous of thanking individuals as I inevitably forget someone important so if that is you, my apologies!

I would like to thank our Hon Secretary Julie Hogarth for all she has done and for watching my back to make sure I don't get into too much trouble!

My thanks also to our Treasurer Penny McMahon who keeps us all on the straight and narrow in such a cheerful way. When all the divisional assets are totalled, we are quite a wealthy association and it is important that our accounts are properly maintained to the satisfaction of both our members and the Charity Commission.

Membership Secretary Mike Hill and the divisional membership secretaries have been doing a heroic job of navigating the tricky waters of the BBKA's eR2 membership scheme. Hopefully the system will become easier as we become more familiar with it.

There have been no BBKA exams or assessments this year but I know a number of members have been studying and I wish you all success in the proposed on line examinations next year. If you are thinking of using the winter to work towards taking a module I can thoroughly recommend the BBKA correspondence courses. There's nothing to stop a group clubbing together to buy one course and submitting group answers. Easy to do with Zoom and an incentive to bounce ideas off each other. Do have a look at the syllabus for 2021 on the BBKA website.

We still have a vacancy for County Archivist. Debbie Ware and Sandra Rickwood updated our archives at Woking last year so there isn't a backlog of work. Just a case of placing new records in the archive as and when needed. This is not an onerous task and would be a great service to SBKA. If you would like to have a go, please let Julie Hogarth know.

Michael Main is our representative at the BeeCraft Magazine AGM. In case you didn't know, BeeCraft is owned by a group of Area Associations. Surrey BKA is a founder of the magazine along with Kent BKA and is the second largest shareholder. The BeeCraft AGM is an opportunity for their directors to welcome representatives from the shareholding associations, explain BeeCrafts latest plans and answer questions about the company. It is usually held in the pleasant surroundings of Wax Chandlers Hall in the City of London. However, this year, like everything else, it had to be a Zoom event. This year Guildford BKA member Andrew Gibb retired after 33 years as CEO of BeeCraft. Under his stewardship BeeCraft has developed from a small A5 production to a full colour 48 page magazine which has won many awards including gold medals at Apimondia. A remarkable achievement. Well done Andrew. I am pleased to say that Alex Ellis is the new CEO. Alex has been with BeeCraft for many years and is a very capable successor to Andrew. Alex is also chair of the Bee Farmers Association.

Sadly there was no Surrey County Show this year so there is little to report. Tracey Longhurst who stepped in to run the 2019 show for the Surrey County Agricultural Society is now 'pursuing other interests'. I have been trying to find a new contact.

And finally, well done everyone for the many creative ways you have found to keep our beekeeping going and for providing our members with a wealth of virtual experiences, social occasions, practical beekeeping help and advice.

Have a very happy Christmas and I hope we will be able to return to some form of normality in 2021.

Bob Maurer
November 2020

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