



Surrey Beekeepers Association AGM 4th December 2021 **Chairman's Report**

Sadly I must begin by reporting the deaths of two prominent members of Surrey BKA, John Hamer and Dennis Scott. Many of us including myself have benefited from training at John Hamer's Blackhorse Apiary and before that Merrist Wood. John is a giant in Surrey beekeeping. He was a huge supporter of the Surrey County Show and many of you will remember him dressed in a smock making skeps at the show. You may not know that he supplied the bees for our flying bee display and observation hives for many years. I also have to report the passing of Dennis Scott at the age of 91. Dennis was a member of Croydon BKA where he held many roles including Chairman, Apiary Manager, Demonstrator and Visiting Advisor. He ran many educational courses for beekeepers and the public. He moved to Cornwall some years ago but is fondly remembered by many of our long-standing members. He was mentor to Croydon member Richard Snelling. His contributions to the county culminated in the award of Honorary Membership of Surrey BKA in 1989.

On a more cheerful note, 2021 has seen us start to return to the practical world of beekeeping. Zoom meetings have continued to play a big part in our activities and several enterprising divisions organised Zoom talks featuring internationally famous speakers. It is so good to see how willing our divisions have been to share their events with others.

There has been resilient and flexible leadership across all divisions with plans in place to ensure members and bees have not missed out. Yet again you have all been amazing.

Your Surrey BKA Council met four times during the year remotely by Zoom. We discussed capitation, Gift Aid, our voting instructions to our delegate at the BBKA AGM (subject of a separate report) and many other topics. For several years we have been discussing issues regarding the correct application of Gift Aid and we are still in discussion with HMRC about this. Progress has been glacial and I apologise for that. We are trying and we will keep you informed of future developments.

Thank you to all our Council trustees and divisional delegates for your constructive contributions and my special thanks to our Hon Secretary Julie Hogarth and our Treasurer Penny McMahon for all the hard work they do for us. Membership Secretary Mike Hill and the divisional membership secretaries have had some issues with the BBKA's eR2 membership scheme but have managed to make the system work. Thanks also to Colin Marshall for looking after our website.

Unusually there have been no changes to our trustees and delegates this year.

One change to our wider team is the retirement of Mollie Bonard as one of the two Surrey BKA representatives on the National Honey Show National Council. Mollie and her late husband Alan made a huge contribution to the development of Epsom BKA and Mollie remains a member and stalwart supporter of Surrey BKA. Thank you Mollie for all you have done to support beekeeping in Surrey. I look forward to seeing you at many events in the future. I am delighted to announce that Julie Hogarth has agreed to take Mollie's place on the National Council. She joins our other representative, Andrew Gibb. There is some confusion about the National Council so let me explain.

The National Council at the National Honey Show is an advisory group. Its purpose is to elect the NHS Chair, Vice Chair, General Secretary, Treasurer and Membership Secretary and to advise the NHS Executive Committee if needed. I have never known anything particularly contentious at a National Council meeting but if there was an issue it would be decided by a members vote. The members are county associations like Surrey BKA. Each county sends one or more delegates according to the size of its membership. There is one meeting a year directly after the NHS AGM which is held during the show each October. The meeting usually lasts about 15 minutes. Any county beekeeping association can be a voting member of the National Council as long as they have paid the annual subscription for their delegates. Associations pay a small subscription (currently £20 per delegate) which contributes to the running costs of the National Honey Show. It is a way for county associations to support the National Honey Show. The National Honey Show Executive Committee is currently re-writing the Articles of Association. We would like to strengthen the role of the National Council and encourage more county associations to join.

Whilst I'm on the subject of the National Honey Show may I take the opportunity to clarify the purpose of the county classes. Currently 6 counties including Surrey BKA have their own county classes at the 'National', open only to their own members. Although these are entirely administered by the NHS team, technically each county has ownership of its classes. There is nothing to stop us adding, removing or re-purposing a Surrey class. It is our bit of the show. Each year Surrey BKA pays for the engraving and prize money for the Surrey classes. I'm not suggesting we need to change anything but I think it's important that you all understand you have that option.

There is nothing to stop other counties approaching the NHS and having their own county classes at the show. The original purpose for county classes was to give a stage to county associations who didn't have their own county show. I believe the original reason for Surrey and Kent having county classes in the NHS even though both counties do have a separate county show was to encourage others. In case you don't know, Surrey BKA and Kent BKA founded the National Honey Show in 1923.

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.

The SBKA Council sends a representative to the British Beekeepers Association Annual Delegates Meeting to vote as decided in discussion at SBKA meetings. Through this 'pyramid' system, members opinions are passed to county and then national level and conclusions are passed back down the line. Every member has the opportunity to make his or her opinion known.

It was good to get back to BBKA exams and assessments after a fallow year. We started the year with virtual modules and I take my hat off to those of you who attempted these. I was an invigilator and that was hard enough! It seemed to me to be adding an extra level of stress to the proceedings but the candidates appeared to cope. Later in the year we returned to practical assessments and we had success at basic, Honeybee Health and General Husbandry levels. Our Examinations Secretary Celia Perry will report in more detail on these. Congratulations to all concerned and well done Celia for your efficient management of the exam system. 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. I know of at least one group of members

who have formed their own study group. If nobody in your division is interested in the module you want to study do ask around the other divisions. With Zoom there are no geographic limits. Our Hon Secretary Julie Hogarth will help you make the right contacts. Do have a look at the syllabus for 2022 on the BBKA website.

We still have a vacancy for County Archivist. Debbie Ware and Sandra Rickwood updated our archives at Woking a few years ago so there isn't a big backlog of work. It's 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 county 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 BeeCraft's 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. This year was a Zoom affair, but we hope to return to a face-to-face meeting in 2022.

Sadly there was no Surrey County Show at Stoke Park this year but that didn't stop us having our own great Surrey Honey Show. That's the subject of another report but well done to all concerned – entrants and organisers.

And finally, well done all of you for the many creative ways you found to keep our beekeeping going during the first half of the season when it wasn't possible to have 'normal' apiary sessions and for providing our members with a Covid safe environment when we were finally able to meet in person. Your efforts are highlighted in the divisional reports published on the Surrey BKA website.

Have a very happy Christmas and I hope 2022 will be better in every way.

Bob Maurer
November 2021

07740 707500

bob@maurer.uk.com