



## Surrey Beekeepers Association AGM 3rd December 2022 Chairman's Report

2022 has seen a return to the practical world of beekeeping. How wonderful! Zoom meetings have continued to play a part in all our activities but it is great to see us returning to normal face to face activities.

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. As I reported last year, we finally have a letter from HMRC (it only took 15 years!) confirming we can claim GiftAid on most elements of our subscriptions but not the element relating to BeeCraft Magazine. We have spent a lot of time this year discussing how to set this out on our divisional membership forms.

Thank you to all our Council trustees and divisional representatives for your constructive contributions and my special thanks to our Hon Secretary Julie Hogarth and our Treasurer Penny McMahan for all the hard work they do for us. Membership Secretary Mike Hill and the divisional membership secretaries continue to have some issues with the BBKA's eR2 membership scheme but have managed to make the system work. Mike has done a great job but he has made it clear he would like to stand down from the membership role. I'm delighted to say that Kathy O'Toole (Croydon BKA) has put her name forward for the membership secretary role. Mike has kindly said he will continue to assist with any eR2 queries but I'm sure he would like to pass that on as well. Thank you Mike for all you have done as our membership secretary. It is very much appreciated.

I'm sad to report the recent death of Wimbledon member, Norman Chapman. He was 98 so he had a good innings. Norman was an expert microscopist and produced some excellent books including 'Pollen Microscopy' which includes many of his lovely drawings of pollen grains. Something to give Dorothy Hodges a run for her money! He also produced sets of slides for the BBKA Exam Board. They will stay in circulation with microscopy assessors for a very long time. They are so good that there's no need to replace them. Our thoughts are with Norman's daughter Val Rhenius and family. I'm currently custodian of Norman's extensive library of microscope slides. In the coming months Val and I will decide how best to preserve Norman's collection and make it available for educational purposes.

There have been a few changes to our trustees and representatives this year. Diane Middlecoat has stood down as Epsom's trustee and Gill Futchter is taking on the role. Thank you Diane for all you have done. We welcome Gill to her new role but she is no stranger to the SBKA Council as she has plenty of experience as Epsom's representative.

Reigate representative Jim Wynn stood down during the year and we welcomed Gill Simpson in his place. Thank you Jim for all you did for Surrey BKA. Members of the SBKA Council will remember that it was Jim who held our hands and helped us through the Covid period when we were all 'Zoom virgins'.

I'm delighted that we now have a County Archivist. Julie Hogarth has kindly agreed to take on this role. Thank you Julie.

Croydon member Alex de Salis has agreed to become our new webmaster. Welcome Alex.

Our website has been an issue and I'm sorry it has not functioned for some months. We should record our thanks to Collin Marshall who took on the website but has been unable to continue. Alex has set up a simple site that will host all the documents we need for our 2022 AGM. In the coming months he has kindly said he will improve the site to make it attractive and useful for the public (who will use it as a first point of contact if they want to know about bees/swarms etc) and for us to post our own information – such as the reports and accounts for this AGM. It's important to stress that the county website is a 'portal' with the main aim of driving enquiries to the appropriate division. It is in no way intended to compete with the excellent divisional websites.

Every year I include a bit of information in my report about the structure of Surrey BKA for the benefit of our newer members. Old hands can skip this bit! 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, individual 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 their opinion known.

Surrey BKA members did so well in the BBKA exams and assessments in 2021 that at the 2022 BBKA Annual Delegates Meeting in January we received the George Knights Award for success in exams and assessment beyond the 'basic'. It came with a very welcome £200 cheque! Every division has stalwarts teaching our members, running courses and organising self help groups. You should all be very proud of yourselves for doing such a great job and my congratulations to all our successful candidates. I can see a few more SBKA Master Beekeepers on the horizon. Well done to our Exam Secretary, Celia Perry for her meticulous management of the exam system.

BBKA intends to make the module exams on-line only and remove the option of taking exams at a designated local centre. In 2023 there will only be 3 venues in UK for attending in person to take a written exam. In 2025 there will be only one venue – BBKA Headquarters at Stoneleigh and in 2025 the only option will be on-line. I'm aware that some candidates find the on-line exams add an extra level of stress. I can see that in the long run, on-line exams will be the norm, but it seems to me that given the older demographic of our members, this change is far too sudden. As I'm afraid we often see, this is a decision that will make life easier for BBKA but not for our members.

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. 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 2023 on the BBKA website.

Michael Main is our representative at the BeeCraft Magazine AGM. Again for the benefit of our newer members, 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 so you own the magazine! 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.

Sadly the Surrey County Show at Stoke Park is unlikely to be held again. For the second year running we held our own very successful Honey Show for members. That's the subject of another report but well done to all concerned – entrants and organisers.

To end on a positive note, we have had a bumper honey crop and that will provide much needed income as it is sold during 2023. I'm sure every division has plans to use these funds but I will make a special mention of Epsom BKA. Their plans for a new kitchen and extracting area turned out to be a much bigger project than originally envisaged due to some structural issues with their building that were only discovered when work started. I know the Epsom team have this in hand and under control so I'm looking forward to seeing the new facility next year.

Have a very happy Christmas and I hope 2023 will be a great year for Surrey beekeepers.

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