



Reigate Division Chair's 2023-24 Report to the Surrey Beekeepers Association AGM

This report attempts to cover the main activities of Reigate Beekeepers and its Members during the year since the SBKA 2023 AGM. I take the opportunity to thank all that have helped make it all happen. However, what this report cannot even start to do within just a few pages, is to adequately acknowledge all the supporting roles and 'behind the scenes' activities of many more individuals, groups and teams. My thanks then also to them, for making what we want to happen, even possible.

External Speakers

During last winter, our Monthly Meetings included two notable on-line talks provided by Katerina Prokopiou from Bees Abroad about 'How beekeeping is transforming the lives of women in Tanzania'; and by Tom Sealey who provided previews of his, then forthcoming, book 'Piping Hot Bees and Boisterious Buzz-Runners'. This winter, Dr Derek Mitchell visited us at Henfold to provide an update on the 'Trees and Hives Compared' talk he gave at last year's Surrey AGM.

Training & Education

The practical training season again started with an horrendously wet April, resulting in initial sessions being cancelled and colonies not pleased to be disturbed when we could. Otherwise, the Henfold training apiary saw record numbers of members in attendance for which ample colonies had been able to be provided. Trainees were divided into mentored hive groups of Beginners; Basics; and Improvers.

Basic Assessment candidates received a combination of online and practical mentoring. Assessments were taken and passed by 12 members with 4 distinctions and 7 credits achieved.

A **Honey Bee Health Assessment study group** programme ran, jointly with Croydon, for Basic Assessment qualified members with 3+ years' experience, from which 9 of our members achieved commendable passes.

A **Module 5 study group** was another collaboration between Reigate and Croydon Division that was well attended and achieved a phenomenal 9 Distinctions and one Credit.

Our **Taster Day** was attended by 22 guests, who were provided with briefings on Health & Safety, Equipment, Costs, and the Law; a live demonstration of a Swarm being rehoused; Hive Inspections; short talks about Baking with Honey, Mead Making and Candle making; and included Honey and Mead tasting.

Apiaries

Our 6 Apiary managers once again delivered stellar performances in the leadership of the RBKA apiaries through challenging weather, recovery from winter losses and sometimes defensive bees.

The **Henfold** Apiary experienced several instances of badly behaved bees and a possible EFB case (investigated by our Seasonal Bee Inspector and proven to be negative), that prompted improvements to some handling procedures. The apiary exits the year with some concerns regarding winter losses, but benefits from an enthusiastic winter team who will work hard to nurse the bees through.

Mickleham apiary, rebuilding for Honey production after winter losses in 2023, has had an excellent year. With strong leadership, mentoring support from our Henfold Manager and an enthusiastic volunteer team, the apiary is well set for winter.

Vigo Apiary has met and exceeded its objectives of Nuc production for sale to members whilst also contributing several supers of honey to the club harvest.

Bletchingly Apiary will continue with treatment free varroa management into next year maintaining a maximum of 3 colonies to ensure the team can commit the time needed to manage the manipulations.

Buckland and **Brockham** apiaries had slow, weather affected, starts to their focusing on honey production, although finished with a harvest slightly up on 2023.

Promoting Bees, Beekeeping and selling Honey

The division has been notably involved in attending 12 local villages events; jointly organising the South of England Bees & Honey - Summer Beekeeping Show and Autumn Honey Show at Ardingly; and supporting the Surrey Show team at the Claygate show and at Denbies Vineyard.

Reigate is happy to have been able to provide temporary, albeit 'Beekeepers only', accommodation for the Surrey Honey Show, since the demise of the Surrey County Show venue

The first full year's use of our branded gazebos demonstrated the advantage of their being readily noticeable, and usefully, the heavy duty roof and side wall material has been proven to be fully heavy-rain proof ... and needed too.

Essential income to fund the maintenance and development of our facilities is generated from the sale of jars of the divisions own honey and from commission on our selling some members honey.

However, supply from our own apiaries has been, during the past few years, exceeding the rate at which we can sell jars at the local shows we attend and the few retail outlets we supply. A significant proportion of our 2022 stock has this year been bought by our members by the bucket, and some external new wholesale customers have started to buy some of our 2023 stock in buckets.

Honey Shows - Show Bench Participation

Creativity, attention to detail and participation in the world of Honey Shows is blooming within the division.

Reigate retained the Vincent Challenge Cup, for a 4th consecutive year, for most points gained by a Division at the Surrey Honey Show. This was due in large part to a broadening of participation by 25 of our members, including the 6 apiaries, who between them submitted 60 of the total of 196 entries. You have to be in it to win it!

Our own Honey Show displayed 159 entries from 37 entrants, inc. from each apiary.

Notable Reigate entries at the NHS included; 'A Shop Window Display' created and put together by four members and earning a well-deserved 3rd Place; our BeeNews editor entered the 'Three Latest Editions of an Association/Branch Newsletter' class, achieving a 2nd place, improving on our 2022 3rd place ... and a member's direct entry in the 'Honey Sultana & Apricot Cake' class also achieved a 2nd place.

Yellow Legged Asian Hornet - Reigate Division

The Reigate YLAH Action and Awareness team currently have 22 RBKA members signed up acting as verifiers/monitors.

Monitoring pots and bait now being used seem to be largely free of bycatch. We also have 3 members trialling the new Nest Sweeper monitoring stations.

Swarm Collection

Our volunteer team of 15 members received over 90 calls from the public, requiring some 60 attendances, including 4 at Gatwick Airport. 23 swarms were able to be collected by or delivered to appreciative members.

Finance Summary

Overall, 2024 finances have improved hugely from last year, but not exceptionally.

Notable changes - 2024 vs (2023) include:

Income	Apiary Trading (Net)	£2,227	(£693)
	Public Donations	£1,535	(£4,273 inc. Grant)
	Swarm Collect' Donations	£1,600	(£2,853)
	Honey Sales	£9,968	(£5,553)
Expenditure	Apiary Consumables	£3,131	(£4,387 inc. 6 Colonies)
	Maintenance	£1,043	(£6,345 inc. Pavilion Refurb)
Annual surplus		£9,276	(-£3,951)

Membership

Membership numbers typically peaked for the year by July/August, with paid-up Membership during October & November subject to the promptness of renewals.

	@ July 2024	@ End Oct 2024 .
Registered Members	170	135
Partner Members	17	15
Junior	1	1
Country	1	2
Local - Honorary	1	1
Local - Associate	2	2
Local - Social	11	8
Total	203	164

NB. Local-Associate members are Registered Members of another SBKA Division or Association

Condolences

It was with considerable shock that earlier this year, Niel Holden was informing us of his having been diagnosed to have an untreatable and likely to be a rapidly progressing form of brain cancer. It was then with equal shock and great sadness that only months later that Neil passed away on 24th November. He will be missed by all who knew and worked with him as a friend, bee buddy, team co-leader and Committee Member.

2025 Officers & Committee

At our 2024 AGM, longstanding President Mike Hill chose to stand down after at least 27 years in service including as Newsletter Editor, Chair, Vice President, Membership Secretary, and President.

Gill Simpson, a previous Hon Sec, also stood down from her place on the Committee, and from her role as Reigate Representative to the Surrey Council. Earlier in the year Neil Holden had also regrettably stood down from the Committee for health reasons.

The new line up is...

President	Bob Maurer	Committee	Janet Kay
Vice President	Andrew Buchanan		Colin Clement
Chair	Richard Bradfield		Sue Scates
Hon Secretary	Liz Jackson		Gerry James
Treasurer	Vince Gallo	Surrey Trustee Nom	Richard Bradfield
Membership Sec.	Simon Ford	Reigate Rep to SBKA	Sue Scates

Richard Bradfield,

Chair, Reigate Division, Surrey Beekeeping Association, December 2024