



## **Surrey Beekeepers' Association AGM 7th December 2024** **Chairman's Report**

I think it's safe to say the start of 2024 was grim. Spring was cancelled and the weather was just dreadful. Eventually our bees were able to get started and made up for lost time. Our members have had very varied experiences this year. I've heard a number of reports of record honey yields. Great news. Personally, I've had the worst year I've ever had and if it had been my first year as a beekeeper I would probably have given up! However, we all know that every year is different and we are all optimists so next year will be wonderful!

This year we have a great honour for one of our own. Avis Marshall started her beekeeping with Kingston BKA, becoming apiary manager and playing an important role helping to organise the BBKA's stand at the Hampton Court Flower Show. She was persuaded to take on the role of Workshop Convenor at the BBKA Spring Convention, a role she held for 10 years, becoming a key member of the organising team. Over a decade she cheerfully corralled 30-40 speakers every year, providing a tremendous range of workshops, seminars and practical lectures. To recognise this, BBKA have recognised Avis with the award of Apiculturae Maxime Se Dedit Certificate. In essence this translates to 'she gave her best for beekeeping'. Avis was unable to be present at the 2024 BBKA ADM in January when the award was announced so I'm delighted that our President Tim Lovett will present the award at our AGM.

Your Surrey BKA Council met four times during the year by Zoom. We hope to have at least one face to face meeting a year but for various reasons it wasn't possible in 2024. We will do our best to do that in future. One of the main topics of discussion this year was how best to support our Asian hornet team. Well done to Helen Worwood and her team for all their hard work. We also discussed capitation, our voting instructions to our delegate at the BBKA AGM (subject of a separate report) and many other topics.

Thank you to all our Surrey BKA trustees and divisional representatives for your constructive contributions and my special thanks to our Hon Secretary Julie Hogarth, our Treasurer Penny McMahon and our Membership Secretary Kathy O'Toole for all the hard work they do for us.

Sadly, we are saying goodbye to Penny at our AGM. Penny has been a wonderful treasurer of Surrey BKA for the past decade. Organised, unflappable and always cheerful she has been a joy to work with. I know I speak for all council members in thanking Penny for all she has done for us and wishing her well in the future. I'm delighted to tell you Penny is passing the baton to a very safe pair of hands. Dr Vince Gallo, currently treasurer of Reigate BKA has stepped up and has been shadowing Penny. Welcome Vince. I hope you enjoy your time with Surrey BKA and I know you will keep us in order!

We are also saying goodbye to Jonathan Brookhouse, Guildford Chair. Thank you Jonathan for your long service on the SBKA Council. Gill Simpson, the representative for Reigate BKA is also standing down. Thank you Gill for all you have done. I know you have your work cut out with your involvement with Reigate BKA. In Gill's place we welcome Sue Scates as the new Reigate representative. Sue –

I hope you will enjoy being part of the team. The divisional representatives are a vital part of the flow of information from ground roots to national level and back.

We have a good team who work together in a constructive and congenial way. It is a pleasure to chair our meetings.

Alex de Salis has done a great job as our webmaster. If you need any website help or want to add anything to the Surrey website Alex is your man. Thank you Alex.

As I say every year, 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. Trustees leave their divisional hats at the door and are responsible for running our charity. Each Division also elects a Representative whose job is to put forward the views of his or her Division and reports 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 via their divisional representative 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 again produced some impressive results in the BBKA exams and assessments in 2024. 34 members passed their Basic Assessment in 2024. Only Yorkshire had more (56) but they have 2,156 members against our 1,051 so actually we did better than them! It was great to see so many Surrey names in BBKA News after passing assessments and modules. Well done to our Exam Secretary, Celia Perry for her meticulous management of the exam system and of course well done to all our successful candidates.

If you are thinking of using the winter to work towards taking a module I can thoroughly recommend the BBKA correspondence courses. The courses are now on-line and have been revised in recent weeks so I hope they will be helpful to groups who want to study together. 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 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 Beecraft's latest plans and answer questions about the company. As has

become customary it was held in the pleasant surroundings of Wax Chandlers Hall in the City of London.

For the 4th year running we held our own very successful Honey Show for members. That's the subject of another report but congratulations to Chief Steward Mike Axford, and grateful thanks to Daphne Thomas, our show bench secretary and Michael Main, show committee member and a past Chief Steward who are standing down from the show committee. Well done to all concerned – entrants and organisers.

I think it's fair to say that 2024 was a rocky ride for some of us from a beekeeping point of view but one way or another we've made it through and I'm sure we are all looking forward to a stellar 2025.

In 2024, BBKA celebrated their 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. In 2028 Surrey Beekeepers' Association will do the same. John Mayne (Croydon division) is looking at how we could make this a very special year. If you have any thoughts do please contact him.

Have a very happy Christmas and I hope 2025 will be another great year for Surrey beekeepers.

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