



Surrey Beekeepers' Association AGM 6th December 2025

Chairman's Report

How was your year? Much better weather than 2024 but was it a better year for our bees? For me there was a good early flow but the summer was less productive. What was your experience?

As usual, your Surrey BKA Council met four times during the year by Zoom. We always hope to have at least one face to face meeting a year but for various reasons it wasn't possible in 2025. We will do our best to remedy that in future. Again, one of the main topics of discussion was how best to support our Asian hornet team. Well done to Helen Worwood and her team for all their hard work. We all know about the sightings in Surrey and how important it is for us all to be vigilant. We also discussed capitation, our voting instructions to our delegate at the BBKA AGM (subject of a separate report) and many other topics.

A great deal of work has been done on our Safeguarding and Code of Conduct policies for Surrey BKA. This is ongoing and we should particularly thank Croydon trustee John Mayne who has taken the lead on this and given it a great deal of time and thought.

We have a great team who work together in a constructive and congenial way. It has been a pleasure to chair our meetings.

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 Vince Gallo and our Membership Secretary Kathy O'Toole for all the hard work they do for us.

Our divisions have had a busy year. I refer you to their individual reports. All our divisions had successful winter courses. Picking out a few highlights that I noticed at council meetings during the year I recall Kingston's issues with oak processionary moth and the overenthusiastic health and safety officer at the Bentall Centre. Kingston also did a great job at the Claygate flower show. I'm aware that Farnham is in discussion with the Rural Life Living Museum as their apiary is on the museums land and they need to keep the museum close. Croydon's bursary scheme produced donations to Haling Grove Project and the Coulsdon Community Project. Weybridge are to be congratulated on their new Training apiary and Education Centre in the Eco Park adjacent to the SUEZ site near Shepperton. Epsom and Reigate divisions had notifications of EFB in their areas but introduced robust bio-security measures. Fortunately there were no cases in our apiaries. Epsom had a visit from their local MP in July and Reigate had a visit from the Mayor of Reigate and Banstead who presented Chairman Richard Bradfield with a well deserved Mayors Volunteer Award. An excellent Bee Health Day for all our members was held at Reigate's apiary on 14th June. One Regional Bee Inspector and four Seasonal Bee Inspectors made it a very successful and informative day for all our members around the county. It has been great to see inter-division collaboration with study groups. Croydon, Epsom and Reigate set up a a successful joint study group for Honey Bee Health. Reigate has an ongoing project with Bees Abroad to fund a project helping individuals in Rwanda to learn how to make a living from beekeeping. As we approach Christmas it's good to remember how lucky we are in Surrey and to think about others less fortunate.

I was delighted that Weybridge members Marion and Geoff Cooper were awarded certificates from the BBKA celebrating their 40 years of beekeeping. (Actually more but BBKA only do round numbers!) Marion and Geoff continue to contribute so much to Weybridge BKA and Surrey BKA and it is right that their efforts should be recognised. You may have seen their picture in the current BeeCraft magazine receiving their certificates from BBKA trustee Richard Oliver at the National Honey Show.

I will have missed many things so please forgive me if I haven't mentioned your projects and activities.

As usual we have some changes in divisional representation. Gill Fitcher has retired as Epsom Trustee. She has been on the Council for 8 years, 5 as Epsom Chair, 3 as trustee. Stuart Gendall is also retiring as chairman of Epsom. Thank you both for your great contribution to the management of Surrey BKA. In Gill's place we welcome Helen Worwood as the new Epsom Chair. As I write we look forward to hearing Epsom's nominee for Surrey BKA trustee.

Welcome and congratulations to Guildford BKA's new chair, Peter Jones, Wimbledon's new chair Dave Charnley and Kingston's new representative Keith McMahon.

At Reigate BKA there were musical chairs as chairman Richard Bradfield stood down at Reigate's AGM. Reigate's representative Sue Scates has been elected as their new chair so congratulations to her. She is now Reigate's nominee for their trustee. Richard was elected as Reigate's rep on the new council. The divisional representatives are a vital part of the flow of information from ground roots to national level and back.

Other variations in divisional trustees and representatives may arrive too late to include in this report so these will be available on the website and will of course be announced at the meeting.

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. Alex does a great job of striking the right balance.

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.

Looking back to 2024, Surrey BKA members produced some impressive results in the BBKA exams and assessments. 34 members passed their Basic Assessments. Only Yorkshire had more (56) but they have 2,156 members against our 1,051 so actually we did better than them! We discovered at the BBKA ADM in January 2025 that we had won the Surrey Shield for the best performance in basic assessment passes in 2024. We are the only association to have won the trophy three times. That's a huge credit to all our members who have put themselves forward for basic assessments and to our wonderful trainers. It was also great to see so many Surrey names in BBKA News after passing assessments and modules this year. Well done to our Exam Secretary, Celia Perry for her meticulous management of the exam entries 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 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 in May.

I have been reviewing my beekeeping commitments this year and decided that after 15 years as a director of BeeCraft and 8 years as chairman including navigating the choppy waters of Covid, it was time to stand down so having given notice at the 2024 AGM I resigned from the magazine at the company AGM in May of this year. A huge amount of work has gone into restructuring the management of the magazine and I hope you agree that the editorial quality is first class. I wish BeeCraft well for the future and hope that all Surrey members will continue to support it.

For the 5th year running we held our own very successful Surrey BKA Honey Show for members. This year it was at Denbies Vineyard near Dorking. That's the subject of another report but congratulations to Chief Steward Mike Axford, and grateful thanks to Simon Ford, our show bench secretary, Richard Bradfield for his administrative skills and all of you who helped to steward the show. Well done to all concerned – entrants and organisers. Mike needs lots more helpers in 2026. It's a very enjoyable day out at Denbies – and you get to talk about bees! Put the date in your diary – Sunday 6th September 2026 and do volunteer a few hours of your time. Many hands make light work.

Just a gentle reminder that in 2028 Surrey Beekeepers' Association will celebrate our 150th anniversary. 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.

Although this is not strictly Surrey business, I hope you will forgive me mentioning the Kings Award for Volunteer Service that was granted to the National Honey Show recently. This is really special. There is no higher award for volunteer organisations in UK. The Department of Culture, Media and Sport who administer the award describes it as the MBE for voluntary associations. Many of you are volunteers at the show so this is your award. Thank you so much for all your support. If you have

never stewarded at the show, come and join us at the 2026 show. We would love to have you and we will definitely be celebrating our award.

Tim Lovett was instrumental in gaining the award as nominations must come from a person who knows the show but is not a part of its organisation. Tim did an excellent job as he has done for the past 15 years as our President and as our Chairman before that. We are very lucky to have Tims extensive knowledge of beekeeping at a national level and particularly, as a past President of the BBKA, his detailed knowledge of the inner workings of that organisation. I am delighted that we are not losing his knowledge and expertise as he will be taking over the role of ADM delegate for Surrey BKA at the BBKA's Annual Delegates Meeting in January 2026. In the meantime, thank you Tim for all you have done for Surrey BKA.

This AGM is a bittersweet moment for me as I have decided that it is time for me to stand down as your chairman and ADM rep. I joined the SBKA Council in 2005. In 2007 I became the Surrey BKA rep at the BBKA ADM, a job I have done for 19 years. In 2010 I was elected chairman of SBKA so I have been in that role for 15 years. It has been a great honour to be your Chairman and I am grateful to all of you for trusting me with this special role. It has been a personal joy to watch all our divisions grow and prosper over the years. All of you continue to put such passion into what you do and the results show. Well done and long may it continue.

Have a very happy Christmas and I hope 2026 will be another great year for Surrey beekeepers. I wish my successor as Chair a long and very happy period in office.

Bob Maurer

07740 707500

bob@maurer.uk.com

November 2025