

REIGATE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION
Division of Surrey Beekeepers Association
Chairman's Report for the Year 2020/21 to the SBKA AGM

Despite issues created by the Covid pandemic, Reigate Division had entered into our 2020/21 Winter season in good shape and has continued, throughout 2021, to adapt to the new norms in terms of Meetings, Education and Trading. The actual condition, needs and management of our bees; whether members own or the divisions, has however been more problematic to comprehend. Honey crops have varied from poor to non-existent.

Membership

Total numbers for 2020-21 were up by 8 on 2019-20.

We closed 2021 with 163 BBKA Registered, Partner, Honorary & Junior members; 3 BBKA Country members and 53 BBKA Local members - Associate, Minor and Friends classes.

We have renamed and redefined some of the Local classes for 2021-22 in order to better distinguish between trainees without colonies of their own and all non-beekeeping 'Friends'. Newly classified 'Trainees' have the option of including a BeeCraft subscription at Membership rates and will be expected to upgrade to a Registered/Partner/Junior class upon acquiring bees of their own to ensure insurance cover. The Associate class is now applicable only to members already either Registered or Partner members with another Association or Surrey Division.

Finances

Last year (2019-20) significant costs were incurred in opportunistic and necessary maintenance of the apiary and other facilities whilst experiencing a reduced income from external activities, incurring a slight loss for the year. However, this year we benefitted from the improved circumstances which allowed greater activity, and last year's maintenance costs resulted in a lower spend this year. As a result, for the 2020-21 we return to surplus (£7917). Noteworthy contributors to this excellent outcome are the sales of RBKA honey (up by £3500) primarily through three local retail outlets, together with continued income from members and public donations (£3000 in total), and from training courses; as well as a reduction in the cost (and need) of maintenance following the successful campaign last year during 'lockdown'.

Education

Our use of online Zoom conferencing facilities had continued monthly through October to March and included celebrity contributions from **Jamie Ellis**, and **Celia Davis**.

The commencement of this year's Winter Theory course, normally run over 10 weekly evening sessions was postponed, and eventually successfully condensed into a set of Zoom talks provided by **David Rudland** during March and April. In preparation for an anticipated return to Henfold, during March, our Henfold Apiary managers, with small numbers of socially distanced helpers, were able to roll out the new 'Ambrose' donated equipment.

When a return to hive inspections by members in number was still not possible during April, pioneering efforts were made by our two presenters and an 'Outside Broadcast' team of five, driving the IT, cameras, microphones, lights and keeping fingers crossed for the 4G connection. They provided hive inspections beamed via Zoom from the training apiary. A Basic Assessment Study Group also commenced participating in online discussions for seven weeks via Zoom each Monday evening.

By late May they were also able to gather round pristine hives, with Hive Tutors, for practical coaching on Wednesday evenings. This combination of online and practical mentoring has proved to be very successful. All 15 candidates passing the Basic, 8 with Credits and 5 with Distinctions. One of our members also passed the Honey Bee Health exam and another took and passed two BBKA modules.

Swarm Team

Not as busy with actual swarms this year, but an increased incidence of callouts to colonies established in buildings, some possibly since 2020; and latterly to frenetic foraging!

Activities

During May, Reigate also hosted two sessions of an 'Emergency First Aid Training' course provided by an external trainer and attended by 9 Reigate members, 7 Guildford members, 4 Croydon members and 2 members each from Kingston and Wimbledon.

Gates were finally able to be (cautiously) opened to all members at the end of June. It was delightful to be able to see and welcome more members to Henfold again, especially those that had not regularly participated in the online meetings. We were finally able to provide hive-side time for our Beginners from both the 2021 and 2020 Winter Theory Course.

20 members of the public attended our Taster Day in July, and a Summer Garden Party was also held during which plaques to the memory of Audrey Gill on two demonstration hives were unveiled by husband John. A pergola, constructed by our 'groundsmen', was dedicated as the **Lord Hanson Foundation Education Space**, by a representative of the Foundation trustees who have been a generous supporter of our Division.

Winding down beekeeping activities commenced in September with our Extraction Day, during which beginners and not so beginners got to be shown and use a range of extraction equipment. In the process, they extracted what little of the honey harvest there was to be processed. By way of an experiment and to partially compensate for meetings lost at the beginning of the season, weekly meetings were extended through to the end of September. However, rapidly shortening days resulted in little real benefit, other than the novelty of hive teams returning from their hives by the light of mobile phones.

Honey Shows

Reigate was delighted and honoured to have been asked to host a delayed SBKA 2021 Surrey Honey show at Henfold during September, following our inaugural use of the pavilion for our own show in 2020. We were then all the more delighted to achieve a competition 'double', with a Reigate member winning the **Composite Cup** for 'Surrey member with Most Points' and Reigate itself winning the **Vincent Challenge Cup** for the 'Surrey Division with Most Points'. It is only the fourth occasion that we have won that challenge and we had to wait 43 years since last achieved in 1978.

Our own Honey Show this year was then also successfully held again at Henfold in October, having already decided to not attempt a public Beekeeping Show this year.

And the Show Bench momentum was carried forward to the 'National' with Reigate Members earning places in fourteen Classes, ten of which were Firsts, and coming away with the **Mead Makers' Mazer**, (for Class 60, Dry Mead), the **Morecroft Bowl** (for Class 86: Any interesting or instructive Exhibit - see photo below) and the **Surrey WJ 1968 Cup** (for Reigate member with most points in NHS Open Classes). By way of a postscript, three of our members featured in the December BeeCraft NHS photo spread.

House & Grounds

There has been significant work undertaken by our tremendous Grounds team (of two) in painstakingly preparing and retreating the outside of the pavilion, using materials purchased for the purpose during 2019-20.

Space within the pavilion has been repurposed to provide Honey Stock storage. Within our Quartermasters container, all the store's items are now behind an internal door and perspex sneeze screened 'shop' counter; with visitors bee suits in-front of the counter.

Elsewhere, hireable equipment and show equipment and materials have been able to be better segregated ... and more readily located and accessed as a result.

In Remembrance

During the year, we have seen the passing of four long serving members, each notable in their own ways.

Audrey Gill - a founder and early driver of RBKA's education programme, as well as being highly influential throughout Surrey.

Tom Moremon – one of life's real gentlemen beekeepers.

Richard Danpure – whose mead making was legendary.

Eddie Webster - who had established RBKA's methodology of Swarm Collection and was instrumental in reporting the 'Land For Sale' notice whilst driving along Henfold Lane, leading to RBKA buying the Henfold Apiary site.

All are sadly missed.

Officers & Committee

I thank our Officers and Committee members who have all contributed directly through their often-multiple roles and also provided advice, guidance or simply support, during the past year.

After 10 years as our Honorary Secretary, **Gill Simpson**, indicated her wish to stand down from that role. Gill agreed to stand as a Committee Member to assist a successor, as well as continue her other role of 'Beginners Course' and 'Taster Day' participant coordinator. We are fortunate indeed to have found an almost willing successor in **Liz Jackson**, who accepted nomination for and was elected into the role of Hon Sec at our AGM in November.

Our Honorary Membership Secretary, **Sue Hickson**, had also indicated a need to step back from her position, having overseen for some three years the transition from our Spreadsheet based system to use of ER2 for managing membership renewals. Again, Sue agreed to stand as a Committee Member to provide continuity and support for a successor. **Simon Ford**, already a Committee Member as well as Reigate's Apiary Managers Coordinator, offered to take on the additional role. Simon was duly elected during our AGM as Honorary Membership Secretary.

With no other changes, **Mike Hill** remains as President, myself as Chair, **Vince Gallo** as Treasurer, and **Bob Maurer, Celia Perry** and **Jim Wynn** as the other three of now five Committee Members.

I am again nominated for 2022 as Reigate's Trustee of SBKA, and **Jim Wynn** remains as Reigate Division's Representative on the Surrey Council.

Richard Bradfield
21st November 2021



Reigate members cluster at the National Honey Show to pay homage to the Big Bee, the winning Class 86 entry ... now named 'Honor'