

**KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION**  
**SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS**  
**BRANCH NEWSLETTER**

**December 2017**

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See our website: [www.kentbee.com/stw/](http://www.kentbee.com/stw/)

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### **Christmas Social**

We are holding the traditional fish and chip Christmas supper at the Buck's Head, Godden Green, near Sevenoaks, on Wednesday December 13. If you want to attend please give your name to Liz Birchenough as soon as possible and let her know if you will be having the fish and chips or choosing something else from the menu. Email [home@silverbirch.me.uk](mailto:home@silverbirch.me.uk)

### **One Hundred Years of Beekeeping**

This year we are celebrating the centenary of the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells branch of the beekeepers' association. To mark the occasion John Hendrie gave a brief talk on the history of beekeeping and our organisation. In the 1400s beekeepers became important when clergy needed wax for church candles. In those days the honey was seen as a problem. By the 1600s Charles Butler had written his treatise, *The Feminine Monarchie*, in which he said the hive was ruled by a Queen Bee and not a King Bee as previously thought. By the 1830s Charles Darwin was working with top-bar hives but the beekeeping world had to wait another 20 years for Langstroth and others to come up with moveable frames. This was when modern beekeeping took off.

In 1874, the British Beekeepers' Association was formed. At about the turn of the century, groups of beekeepers started coming together. There is evidence that in Kent, a number of groups formed and then faded away. The Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells branch was established in 1917, towards the end of the First World War. The numbers of beekeepers steadily grew to the point where Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells divided into separate organisations in the 1930s. Membership of all the associations reached a peak during the Second World War when keeping bees entitled people to extra sugar rations.

In the 1960s the Sevenoaks branch was nearly disbanded. The secretary at the time announced that there was only £20 of assets and advised people not to rejoin. John Hendrie's father decided to ignore the advice and paired up with another member to revive the branch. After about sixty years of going its own way, Tunbridge Wells asked to reunite with Sevenoaks in 1995 to form the branch we have today.

*Mary Staffurth*

### **AGM: Keeping the Branch Running**

There was a reasonable number of people at the branch AGM. Our chairman, Cliff Hayward, said he wanted to pay particular thanks to all those who had helped with the smooth running of things over the past year. He mentioned Paul Abbott, who stepped in to give his presentation about photography six months earlier than planned, and John Hendrie, who delivered a talk with just a few minutes' notice when a speaker failed to appear. Cliff also thanked John Farrow and Rob Thompson for "jumping through hoops" with the National Trust to arrange the visit to the apiary at Chartwell. Ellen Montelius was mentioned for her work at Hilbert Road apiary and for hosting meetings at Pepenbury, Richard Rose for organising the honey show, Liz Birchenough for taking on the membership secretary role as well as being treasurer and John Farrow for all his work dealing with members of the public, collecting swarms, and keeping the branch running smoothly.

All the existing officers and committee members were re-elected. They are: President – Peter Hutton; Chairman – Cliff Hayward; Vice-Chairman – John Hendrie; Treasurer – Liz Birchenough; Secretary – John Farrow; Other committee members – Sarah Rapley, Richard Rose and Paul Abbott. John Hendrie will continue to be our representative to the KBKA council but there remains a vacancy for another representative.

### **AGM: Treasurer's Report**

Our Treasurer, Liz Birchenough, presented the annual accounts. She said we were in a reasonably comfortable financial position. She thanked members who had made donations either by paying extra with their subscriptions or by giving beesuits and equipment to the branch to sell. She warned that the amount of honey extracted from the club apiaries this year was lower than in previous years so the income from honey sales will be comparatively lower during the next financial year.

## AGM: Cups and Prizes



*Richard Rose, the Honey Show Secretary, with the Cups that were being awarded*

There were nearly 100 entries in our honey show this year. Many of the members who won certificates and cups were there to receive their awards. Paul Abbott was presented with several cups, including the Sloane Challenge Cup for the most points awarded in the show. Jennifer Brothers was presented with a certificate for passing the Module 5 beekeeping exam.

Every year the Chairman awards a cup to someone of his choice (*writes Mary Staffurth*). This time, much to my surprise, he decided to give it to me. As Cliff said himself, there are so many people who do a lot of work for the branch. He also said he thought the newsletter was an important point of contact and that I had been editing it for as long as he could remember.

In fact, when we acquired our bees from my father-in-law and joined the branch in the early nineties, Rodney Turk edited the newsletter, among many other duties. I remember him saying that it was very difficult to get people to provide any content and one of his secrets was to recycle his articles from previous years. John Edwards-Winsor then took on the newsletter, again while performing other branch roles.

My involvement did not begin until about 2004, with a job-share: John Hendrie and I edited the newsletter on alternate months. In 2008 John, who had many other branch duties, stepped down. Sue Taylor-Lowen took his place and we worked together until the end of 2009. Since then I have edited the newsletter on my own – although Penny McCulloch did guest-edit when I was on holiday.

I would like to thank the many members who have contributed photos and articles over the years. I rely on those hosting the Barrwood and Hilbert Road meetings to let me know what has happened. These days, John Farrow's work on the website means that I can always rely on him to provide material when I find myself staring at a blank page.

If anyone is interested in taking a more active part in the production of the newsletter please let me know. Perhaps we could start a system of guest editors.

## AGM: Club Apiaries

Cliff Hayward said that no-one had come forward to take on the management of the Hilbert Road Apiary following Ellen Montelius's decision to step down. He now wants to explore whether a small group of people could run the apiary together. Richard Rose has already said he is willing to be one of the group. If you are interested then please contact one of the committee members.

## AGM: Next Year's Programme

A series of interesting talks has been arranged for next year. The topics include bumble bees, solitary bees, plants for bees and cooking with honey.

During the season meetings will take place at the club apiaries but the committee wants to hear from anyone who is willing to host a visit to their apiary. Contact Cliff Hayward: [pbhayward9@hotmail.com](mailto:pbhayward9@hotmail.com)

*The AGM minutes and the 2017 Financial Statement are published in full on our website:*

<http://www.kentbee.com/stw/bm~ doc/agm-minutes171121.pdf>

<http://www.kentbee.com/stw/bm~ doc/financial-statement-170913 .pdf>

## Beekeeping Survey

Two students at Queen Mary University of London, Qiwen Chen and Jianing, are asking beekeepers to fill in a survey to help them with their student research project about apiary monitoring and management under the supervision of Dr. Requena. They say the purpose of this survey is to better understand how beekeepers currently manage their apiaries and how technology can facilitate apiary management. They have provided a link to their online survey.

<https://www.wjx.cn/jq/18422651.aspx>