

# SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2021

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## Branch Annual Meeting

This year's AGM was the most difficult that I have ever attended. Differences between committee members spilled over into the meeting making it, at times, an uncomfortable experience.

The chairman, Cliff Hayward, began with a look back at the year and the gradual return to normality. He said that in 2022 our first two meetings, in January and February would take place via Zoom. In March and April talks will take place in Weald Memorial Hall and the monthly meetings will be extended into May and August. There will also be a beginners course.



*John Farrow is presented with the Chairman's Cup by Cliff Hayward*

Cliff told the meeting that despite Vic Webb's excellent work at the Hilbert Road apiary he had been abusive to the treasurer, Liz Birchenough. Cliff asked members to reject Vic's attempts to gain a committee position, saying that if he succeeded other committee members would resign in protest. Vic said he had not been abusive and had simply written emails to reject attempts to interfere with his running of the apiary. Cliff told Vic that he had been impossible to work with on the committee. Peter Hutton, the branch president, joined in, telling Cliff that he was the one who should stand down.

Liz Birchenough said the number of members had dropped, largely as a result of the pandemic. In her treasurer's report she said that all the honey from 2020 had been sold and only a handful of jars remained from this year's smaller crop. She said that holding meetings on Zoom had cost a similar amount to talks in the hall because speakers still had to be paid and we had to pay for a Zoom licence. Peter Hutton said he wanted to highlight the fact that he had saved the branch hundreds of pounds over repairs to the shed roof at Hilbert Road, which was thought to contain asbestos. Liz had received an estimate for £700 from a surveyor recommended by KBKA but Peter pointed out that he did the work himself for £50.

When it came to the elections, Paul Abbott, was voted in as president, replacing Peter Hutton, who did not stand. Cliff Hayward was elected chairman by an overwhelming majority. Liz Birchenough was elected vice-chairman by an overwhelming majority, replacing John Hendrie, who is moving to Scotland. Liz was also voted in as treasurer and membership secretary. John Farrow was elected secretary. Those elected to the committee were Sue Knights, Huw Griffiths, Richard Rose, Martin Barrett and John Hendrie. In a note to the meeting Sarah Rapley said she was standing down from the committee because the clash of personalities made it an unpleasant experience. Cliff Hayward, Sue Knights and Vic Webb all stood for the two posts of BBKA council representatives; Sue and Cliff were elected. As far as the branch apiaries were concerned Cliff said he was happy to continue as Barrwood manager. Both Vic Webb and Sue Knights were proposed for the position of Hilbert Road apiary manager; Sue Knights was elected by an overwhelming majority. Cliff said he wanted to highlight how much good work Vic had done with his improvements at Hilbert Road.



*Jonathan Green receives the Carter Cup after winning the novice honey class*



Under any other business Peter Hutton said he was opposed to the committee's plans to hire the motorised extractor to members because he was sure it would get broken.

Once the AGM business was over it was time for prize-giving. Cliff awarded the Chairman's Cup to John Farrow for his work on the web page, as swarm coordinator and branch secretary.

Newly-elected president, Paul Abbott, presented the cups and certificates to winners from the honey show. He also paid tribute to Peter Hutton for all his hard work during his years as president although by this point Peter and Vic had left the meeting.

*Mary Staffurth*

*Paul Abbott presented John Hendrie with a framed photograph to mark his work in beekeeping. The picture was taken after John received his commendation for 40 years on the executive committee of the National Honey Show in October. He is now President of the National Honey Show. John stepped down as our branch vice-chairman because he is moving to Scotland but he said he would be happy to remain on the committee as he would be visiting Kent.*

## Musings from the Chair

The Big Issue magazine runs a regular column titled 'Note to my younger self'. Someone reviews the sort of things they did in the past and how they should have changed for the better. So I thought I would consider what I would attempt to change this year compared with previous years (beekeeping-wise, of course).

I will ensure that I clean up all the stored equipment. It is tempting to think I have plenty of time before it is needed again but, once the weather gets particularly cold and wet, I will want to be doing warmer jobs than scrapping wax from queen excluders. Then, suddenly, spring is upon us and, as in previous years, I am not ready for the short season ahead.

I treat stored comb with acetic acid to kill wax moth larvae. However, occasional rechecking throughout the winter is recommended in order to treat again if necessary. The acid should not be left on for more than a couple of weeks otherwise all the foundation wiring and nails in the frames corrode. After ventilating the boxes, they can be subject to infestation by wax moth, which seem to be active quite late in the year. I have often wanted to use drawn comb the following season only to find most of it ruined by wax moth larvae despite initially treating.

I will also promise not to buy any more equipment. With a shed, garage, loft and spare room filled with various bits of 'essential' beekeeping equipment, I couldn't possibly need any more! So I guess I should cross off my Christmas list the latest additions to the Thornes catalogue. Namely a COB light to see eggs more easily, and a four-litre rectangular feeder that actually fits nucleus boxes. But then again, if I cross them off, what could my mother buy me? Socks again!

Talking of Christmas, may I, on behalf of the committee wish you all a merry Christmas and may your bees prosper in the New Year.

*Cliff Hayward, Branch Chairman*

## Wanted: Bee Partner

I am new to beekeeping but hope to get going next year. Initially I thought I would use my own garden but I am not sure it is big enough. When I read about the orchard at Knole Park being offered as an apiary site I thought it would be a great opportunity as I know Knole well. However, I would not be able to take up this opportunity on my own so is any other beekeeper interested in teaming up with me? If so, please email me.

*Caireen Surgeoner*

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