

South Chiltern Beekeepers' Association

Committee Meeting

Wednesday, 5th November 2014, 7.30pm

Woodcote Community Centre

MINUTES

Present: Caroline Bushell, Linda Clarke, Reg Hook, Margaret Moore, Filipe Salbany, Tim Selwyn, Max Stone, Meryl Toomey, Max Vine, John White.

Welcome: new committee member Filipe Salbany

1. Apologies: Sue Remenyi, Ron Crocker. Not present: Bev Woodford.
2. Minutes of last meeting
Committee minutes for September 17th 2014 were approved with the following amendment:
Agendum 7: ...Thanks also to Joanna Knott and Steve Radford
3. Matters arising
None
4. Treasurer's report
Balances:
Deposit account £2195
Current account £3563
Petty cash £94
Accounts have been signed off by auditor Richard Bushell; the traditional fee has been 6 jars of honey, but as Richard is also a beekeeper, he was offered the more appropriate item of a copy of Collins Beekeeper's Bible, accepted on his behalf by Caroline Bushell. MS
5. Membership report
A new member moving here from Newbury has just joined, and as it's so late in the year the committee agreed to make her payment extend to the end of 2015. The BBKA capitation is not affected by this, as invoices are presented to us twice a year on 1st April and 30th September, and her BDI insurance is valid.
The 2015 membership form is not complete yet as it needs reformatting, with additional information requests on hive types operated and length of beekeeping experience. Membership fees for next year will be increased to £27 for full members; £16 for partner members; £17 for country members. Associates will remain the same at £8. CB

5a. Website progress

Dave Moss attended the meeting to report on a project to select appropriate software to enable automation of subscription payments via the SCBKA website, and streamline membership data handling requirements. Following the drawing up of a requirements specification, three products were examined: WebCollect, ClubBuzz and GoCardless. The first two are web-based front ends for GoCardless. Considering the pros and cons of these, the best fit is currently WebCollect, but ClubBuzz has a new product in the pipeline, GroupBuzz, which could be modified to offer the improvements in flexibility we would need, available about the end of 2014. In the meantime, his recommendation is to enable BACS payments by adding SCBKA bank details to our membership form, with a reference to enable reconciliation of payments. Direct debits will not be possible, as membership fees can change with, for example, number of hives or Beecraft subscriptions. DM

It was noted that scanned images of our accounts on the SCBKA website show personal signatures, which is not desirable, and the signatures will be removed.

6. Donations collected at shows

Congratulations and thanks to Reg and Linda, who collected donations totalling £83.40 at the shows they attended on behalf of SCBKA this year. Linda noted that money was mostly given after the box was labelled "for research and education". Money collected is intended for the BBKA, as they provided the printed leaflets, and there was discussion on whether we could stipulate its use for this purpose, or request it be spent on BBKA's CB Dennis Trust. Caroline undertook to find out details.

7. Association apiary

Reg reported a hectic year with multiple swarming. Four of the ten apiary hives belong to Peter Mikic; one was troublesome, seeming bent on self-destruction by continually rejecting five or six attempts to re-queen it. The Summer Experience started well but dwindling attendance led to the sending out of a questionnaire to find out why. Reg went through the answers received, which showed that the experience had overall been a positive one for attendees, with appreciation of the level of expertise and helpfulness of the trainers. There were just a few suggestions for improvement: more handling opportunities to build experience and confidence; posting of topics covered in advance of each session; ensure everyone understands what is happening and why; ensure the loudspeaker is available. Most would be happy to repeat the course, and the non-attenders who did not respond at all should be sought out at future meetings by the trainers to find out if there were any problems we can address. Margaret Moore suggested that the price of the course could be too low, and charging a fee commensurate with the skill level of the trainers might help attendees to appreciate its true value; the BBKA charges £180 for a practical course. John White suggested the purchase of a nuc by a beginner could be coupled with the course.

8. Winter workshops

Max V read a statement on behalf of the committee and membership to say sorry to Reg for any hurt or humiliation he felt at the AGM meeting, as no harm or embarrassment was intended.

On behalf of Sue Remenyi, Max V reported on a poll of members to assess levels of interest in the idea of a winter workshop. Reg reported that it had worked well in the past. 27 people had responded, and Sue compiled a spreadsheet of potential topics. It was noted that response may not carry through to attendance, but as we have the opportunity to build confidence and practice without bees present, in a distraction-free comfortable environment, we should try it and see. The content has to be correct, written in advance and checked for accuracy. Reg will check the written material available from Mid-Bucks BKA.

Margaret mentioned that a welcome pack for new members would be useful. John has suggested this before; we had such a thing in the past, and he has offered to draft a leaflet for it.

9. BBKA Project – UK study into Deformed Wing Virus strain

John described the plea for samples and for funding from beekeeping associations by Professor Steve Martin of Salford University to help create an incidence map for the UK, and develop understanding with the aim of eventually being able to formulate a mitigation strategy. The amount requested from associations is £800, and we currently have total funds of about £6000. As Max V felt it would be unfair to spend members' money in this way without asking, Caroline suggested canvassing members' opinions first. It was proposed that it would be better as a Federation issue. Filipe suggested finding out the threshold total needed by Salford for the project to go ahead, and John will contact Professor Martin before asking Caroline as Federation Chairman to request £200 from each of the four member BKAs to make such a payment on their behalf.

10. Any other business

Linda suggested we could collect seeds of bee-friendly plants for use at show stands, and it would be useful to have a "business card" hand-out with contact details and our web address. She will investigate costs.

Filipe recalled the sad experiences of a swarm collector faced with swarms that could not be collected, only destroyed, and suggested the need to educate the community on the timeliness of what to do and whom to call in order to save more bees. This could encompass leaflets, cards, articles in local newspapers and parish magazines, even local TV at the beginning of the swarming season. In addition to the BBKA system, collector lists could be placed with SODC, police, pest controllers and anyone else the public might try to contact. Filipe undertook to investigate such options in time for next season. Margaret pointed out that it's good practice to keep a swarm long enough to check its health and temperament before selling it on, and full record-keeping would help.

Reg reported that there had in the past been two meetings a year in Reading to offer instruction at a central apiary, but it had proved unworkable as distances were too great. Other associations were envious of our teaching activities, and our teaching apiary is amongst the finest. The only addition we need at present is a light for the shed. Max S will investigate options.

Max V reported that after passing the BBKA Basic Assessment, our member Paul Jenkins is going on to take two higher modules next year.

Tim reported that he had conducted a book audit, and that he would not be able to continue as librarian after the next AGM owing to a health problem. The new librarian would need to have considerable storage space available.

11. Date of next meeting: 7.30 pm, 4th February 2015, Woodcote Community Room