

South Chiltern Beekeepers' Association Committee Meeting
Wednesday, 4th November 2015, 7.30pm
Woodcote Community Centre
MINUTES

Present: Bob Busby, Caroline Bushell, Linda Clark, Reg Hook, Margaret Moore, Sue Remenyi, Meryl Toomey, Helen Walkington, John White.

1. **Apologies:** Duncan Heather
2. **Minutes** of 16th September 2015 committee meeting approved with the following amendments:
 - Minute 6) last sentence: responses required by ~~mid-October~~ **27th September**
 - Minute 13) first sentence: as part of updating **the membership section of** the website
 - Minute 9) last sentence: Kate extracted 9 x 30lb buckets of honey, of which 4 were given to Peter Mikic as ~~rent for the apiary site~~ **hives 1-4 belong to him.**
3. **Matters arising**
 - Minute 5) last sentence: *The committee can offer help to anyone struggling to cope with this computer-based system.* See discussion under 5. Treasurer's report.
 - Minute 12) Risk assessment draft document: *The committee agreed to re-visit the topic, and in the meantime Margaret will examine the draft text with a view to identifying improvements.* See under 16. AOB
 - Carried forward from Minutes of 10th June 2015, Minute 9) Swarm report: purchase of nuc boxes may still be outstanding. JW will find out, and action if required by the next committee meeting.

Action: JW, by next committee meeting

4. **Committee procedure**

MM requested the committee adopt the modus operandi that only one person speaks at a time to make it easier for everyone, especially RH, to hear clearly, and make it easier for the secretary to take the minutes. She asked that reports or proposals for discussion be circulated in advance to save time in meetings, and that minutes have an action column with a date for completion, and decisions made typed in bold.

MM stated that as not all voting committee positions had been filled, she proposed that RH and LC should become voting members of the committee. CB pointed out this proposal was not necessary as we have enough voting committee members to ensure no quorum issues, and voting committee members can already send in proxy votes if unable to attend a meeting. SR felt that if necessary we can use email voting as we have successfully done before; we should stick to the revised constitution agreed at the AGM (the revision having been proposed by MM and agreed by the previous committee), and RH and LC can come back as voting members of the committee after one year if nominated and elected. JW said that we currently have other non-voting members, and as it has already been discussed and agreed, we do not need to re-visit it. HW reminded us that we cannot change what has just been agreed at the AGM by the membership. **Decision: Reg and Linda remain as non-voting members of the committee unless elected otherwise at the next AGM.** MM noted that the committee will need to revisit the constitution as some of it is out of date. RB concurred, agreeing to work on a draft for circulation to the committee in advance of the next meeting (see AOB).

Action: RB, by next committee meeting

MM asserted that she would like the committee to work well as a team, and JW noted that a difference of opinion is healthy as long as it remains friendly. CB also felt that disagreement is quite natural, but that once a decision is made, argument to change the decision should not continue endlessly; decisions should be adhered to and implemented.

5. **Treasurer's report**

Deposit account: £2196.08
Current account: £4360.93
Cash: not reported. Accounts are not yet audited.

The WebCollect subscription system went live late on 31st October, and by 4th November 29 people had already renewed.

Re Matters arising, Minute 5). Having checked with Dave Moss (who set up the WebCollect system) on the IT difficulties of reconciling payments, MM proposed that one member, who has refused to pay by direct debit on the principle of internet insecurity, and is too valuable a member to lose, should be allowed to renew with a cash payment. LC stated she is also concerned about internet security and won't use WebCollect. RH asked who would be responsible if bank account details were to be hacked. CB advised GoCardless is liable, not SCBKA, and RB said there is no risk as it's a safe and secure way of paying. SR felt we should encourage members to use this system in order to avoid BBKA and Bee Disease Insurance reconciliation issues, and wait to see the scale of the problem. RB reminded the committee that it had already made a decision to adopt it at the last committee meeting, including the premise of not allowing any other payment methods - after considerable work from many people - knowing that such a reaction would be amongst the range of predictable responses. He said that he had sent a very conciliatory email to the person concerned, offering to help him better understand how secure his payment would be; and that a cash payment already sent in would have to be refunded. He also said that manual entry may cause discrepancies in the reconciliation figures for the fees and it should be avoided not least because of the extra time needed to do it. He also reminded the committee that the one off direct debit payment through GoCardless had been agreed as the payment method because it imposed the lowest charges while still doing all the fees reconciliation automatically. The charges imposed by WebCollect are based on a percentage of transaction volume, and independent transactions will cause discrepancies in these figures too. MM asked how long it would take manually to enter all of an existing members' details and CB said it would probably take about ten minutes for each one, plus reconciliation time later. MM pointed out that as the member was going to be away for some time, his insurance would lapse before this could be resolved. HH asked if there was another way for his hives to be insured. MM thought it had to be done via an association such as SCBKA and CB advised that it was in fact possible for him to buy his insurance by joining the BBKA as an individual member, which would avoid an insurance hiatus. JW suggested we could establish a threshold of how many manual entries it would be reasonable to cope with, CB commented that it would become very problematic to decide which member was deserving of being a special case to be included within the threshold. SR suggested waiting until the year end to see how big the problem might be. **Decision: CB will email the committee by 1st January 2016 with the numbers of people who have refused to renew via WebCollect so that it can make a decision about what to do. MM will keep the association member informed and refund his cash payment .**

Action: CB, by 1st January 2016

Action: MM, by 12th November 2015

RB is updating the bank mandates, even though banks do not check signatures on cheques. Max Stone remains on the list while the four officers' (chairman, vice chairman, treasurer, secretary) details are uploaded, which will take some time to effect. He asked that we please round up any outstanding financial claims as the accounts have not yet been audited. He proposes that in future we need a procedure to submit invoices or receipts within a set time period.

RB told us we need to create an asset register for insurance purposes, to include apiary shed/lean to and equipment, hives, extractors, boiler, tables, observation hive, honey stocks, jars, library, videos etc. As SCBKA is an unincorporated club, members are personally liable for any lawsuits that might be brought against SCBKA and we need to identify any gaps in cover such as public liability insurance. The Towergate insurance from BBKA covers members up to a certain amount, but claims over that amount could potentially be brought against committee members and members involved in activities on behalf of the association. It would not cover stolen association equipment. At the apiary, the 4 hives belonging to Peter Mikic are insured for BDI by him and 3 are covered by Linda's BBKA membership fee, leaving 3 uninsured. As under-insurance results in any claim's being refused, we need to insure the apiary hives in their own right. **CB offered to investigate, as other associations insure their apiary hives with BDI. LC will make an apiary inventory and RB will circulate a list**

of known equipment to committee members with a request to update it. MM noted that non committee members are also unaware of the full range of resources available within the association.

Action: CB, LC, RB, by next committee meeting

RB told us we need to institute an approval process for purchases made on behalf of the association, so that we can predict expenditure and provide an audit trail. The constitution needs modernising, as the specification that payments over £75 must be made by cheque was an anti-fraud measure which has been superseded by modern banking methods. SR suggested the setting up of an SCBKA Paypal account which would reduce the number of cheques written and eliminate the reclaim process; for example, the £200 annual budget allocated for library book purchases could be placed in a Paypal account.

SR and RB will investigate the costs of using Paypal.

Action: RB, SR, by next committee meeting

6. **Membership report**

CB reported that 29 have already renewed for 2016, 16 of which used bank transfers last year. There are 3 honorary members: Ian Wooton, country membership; R H, full membership, 25 hives and BeeCraft magazine; and Ron Crocker, currently full membership. She is unsure whether Ron has bees at present, and if not he only needs a country membership which carries no insurance. **MM will find out and report back to advise CB,** as if Ron is sharing an apiary site, underinsurance would result in any BDI claim's being denied.

Action: MM, by end November

MM asked if members phone numbers could be included in future lists circulated to the committee. CB confirmed that telephone numbers will be automatically included in future and any membership data sent to members of the committee would be encrypted with password protection in future. MM requested that **a copy of the email distribution list for members should be lodged with the Secretary for use in emergencies if SR is not available, and this was agreed.**

Action: SR, completed 5.11.15

7. **Federation report**

CB's chairmanship ends in February 2016, and Secretary Martin Moore is also standing down, so volunteers will be invited to take over in due course. The remaining Federation posts are Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Editor.

8. **Training report**

The first Winter Workshop hosted in SR's barn took place on 31st October with 5 new members attending, and SR thanked HW and CB for kindly covering when she was called away for a medical emergency. An email of the training available for November was sent out to the membership and 7-12 people have already signed up for each of the subsequent events. SR plans to send a training email every month. November 14th is Microscopy with JW and November 21st is hive building and maintenance with Max Vine and DH. Later workshops are: Basic Assessment preparation with JW and HW in December; General Husbandry assessment preparation with Lilian and John Valentine in January; Bee Health with Linda and John Rogerson in early February; Swarm control with RH at the end of February; honey extraction with MT in March. - all dates to be confirmed. The Winter Programme leaflet has been updated with the winter workshops.

SR attended the Berkshire and Oxfordshire Training Co-ordinators (BOTC) meeting in October, and will report shortly by email.

Action: SR, by next committee meeting

The feedback on training is invaluable to improving what is offered to members and SR would like to standardise feedback using the simple Survey Monkey software kindly introduced to us by HW, which can include tick boxes and space for free text comments. All voting committee members agreed this was a good idea. SR reminded RH that she was still waiting for him to approve the feedback questions she had sent him for the summer experience. RH said he would send his questions for Summer Experience feedback to Dave Moss, who would send

them out via email to students. This would mean more work for Dave, who has already asked to reduce his association workload, and would not allow for anonymity in responses. JW, SR, HW and CB all made the point that anonymity provides better feedback.

Margaret asked RH and HW to work together to produce the feedback questions for the summer experience, to be sent using Survey Monkey. Feedback will be available on both workshops and summer experience for use in planning for next year.

Actions: RH, HW, by end November

9. **Apiary report**

RH told the committee that all in all it was a very interesting and difficult year. All hives came through the winter except for no 4 (1-4 are Peter's). There was good attendance at the Summer Experience, although some were lost through holidays and other commitments. It was a bad year for swarming and for queens getting mated and some queens just disappeared. Swarming, artificial swarms, queen cell grafting, varroa treatment, disease checks and laying workers were covered, and anything else as it cropped up. One hive was re-queened with one of RH's own native strain of bees, and one united with one of RH's own commercial nucs when, after a 7 week wait, the queen proved to be an unmated drone layer. Two hives were lost, but a nuc to replace one is wintering in RH's garden. The end of the Summer Experience was celebrated with a lovely picnic spread of bread, cheese and cake. Kate Malenczuk kindly did all the honey extraction, but yields were poor (see last committee meeting minute 9). A work party cleaned frames until robbing bees forced a retreat, and Simon Cannings and RB did a good job of painting the shed, for which many thanks. There will probably be another work party and one more meeting to cover over-wintering once the wasps have died out.

In 2016 RH hopes to do more in the Summer Experience, including queen rearing, although there are no guarantees as it has to respond to what the bees are doing right through the season.

As a means of promoting it, MM requested that the SE be used to help towards the Basic Assessment. SR will do a draft of the Summer Programme leaflet for consideration at the next meeting.

Action: SR, by next committee meeting

MM circulated copies of the draft Beginners Guide for checking, for feedback by the end of January.

Action: all, by end January 2016

10. **Show report**

Linda reported a good year for promotions, with Cliveden House's Wild Wednesday for children being new for this year. From their reaction to the gazebo full of goodies for children she expects we will be invited back next year. The free seeds went well with all the show promotions, some children taking them for school projects and even putting pocket money into the donation boxes. The four bee houses were given to four well-deserving children. As usual there was a lot of interest on seeing the bees, and how the public can help. All in all a good result, and now we will think of new things to do for 2016.

11. **Programme report**

For the leaflet update, see item 9.

The winter programme is done, and MM is awaiting response from Liam Trotman to finalise the summer meetings. She asked whether we still want a summer picnic, as attendance has been poor for the last two years. SR said if so, we need to sell it harder, perhaps with a barbecue or something else included to attract more people. MM asked for ideas, and HW suggested piggy-backing on another event such as Brazier's Park, Cliveden, or Woodcote Village Day. The committee were asked to come up with ideas.

Action: all, by next committee meeting

12. **Honey Show**

SR has distributed the honey show email, with 12 classes to enter, including one for children, and new baking recipes. The judges are lined up, and for prizes SR has made a calendar of members' photographs at a cost of £4.60 each plus VAT for 25 copies. In addition we can

take sales orders for additional copies at the honey show and provide them at the December meeting. **The committee decided that SR should order another 25 copies for sale to members at £7.50 each.**

Action: SR, by December meeting

13. BBKA Basic Assessment

7 have already signed up for the BA winter workshop and there may yet be more. JW is willing to help run the assessment in June, but will probably need assistance, as there is considerable tedious paperwork behind the scenes as well as the organisation, hive availability and risk assessment/safety issues. Before the next committee meeting there will be feedback available from the winter workshop BA session.

Action: JW, by next committee meeting

14. IT/webmaster

MM told the committee that Vance Briggs is willing to take on the role, but does not at this point want to be a committee member. He is happy to be co-opted to meetings as needed.

15. SCBKA Observation Hive

MM asked about the use of the SCBKA observation hive this year. CB reported that it was taken to Braziers Park, Blenheim Flower Show and St Piran's school in Maidenhead. Max Vine had prepared it by varnishing, ensuring bees could safely reach the syrup, and making curtains to shade both sides of the glass. It was a great success at its showings, making it easy for the public to look from both sides at once. It is a 14"x12" national nuc, so for an outing must be populated with bees from the same size hive. Max Vine had set it up so that frames can easily be extracted from a nuc box and then replaced back into the nuc box after use. RH keeps bees in his observation hive nuc all year round, but it takes very good management to keep the colony the right size for the box.

16. Any other business

- MM will update the risk assessment document prepared for the last committee meeting before the next one. **Action: MM, by next committee meeting**
- MM reminded us that we have not yet given thanks and gifts to the outgoing committee members, Max Vine, Max Stone and Tim Selwyn, and can make a presentation at the honey show. Options are books or equipment, and HW suggested a Thornes voucher, which could also be spent with John Belcher. **It was agreed that up to £35 could be spent for the two Max(s) and up to £50 for Tim and that MM would buy the gifts and present them at the honey show**
Action: MM, by honey show 18th November
- MM reported that Duncan Brown has requested the resurrection of RH's tips and observations and RH agreed to do this once a month, sometimes fortnightly, as bees/ weather conditions dictate. **Action: RH starting by end November**
- MM pointed out that the constitution needs updating and asked the committee to suggest changes and consider implications. RB will initiate a round robin to be circulated through the committee as a Word document with "Track Changes" switched on.

Action: RB, all, by next committee meeting

- MM referred to the premise that training, education and improvement for members should be the thrust of the association. CB added that education should also cover the public. All agreed. MM reported that she'd asked RH and Kate Malenczuk if they would be willing to run a winter theory course for SCBKA, and they had both agreed. CB queried whether their BCA contracts might preclude this, but it does not. MM has ascertained that a room at the Woodcote Community Centre is available at £6 an hour on a Tuesday evening for 5 weeks in January/February. To make it self-financing there should be a charge for SCBKA members and a higher one for non-members to include associate membership, and it could be advertised to the public in Round & About magazine and local press. RB noted that he or CB can add it to the

shopping basket in WebCollect, which can also produce reports. Both CB and SR made the point that for a course under the SCBKA banner the committee should see and approve the syllabus and content, and that we only have four or five new members at present. MM reported that Kate's idea for the course called "Successful beekeeping through knowing and understanding honey bees" could include an extended half hour for more experienced beekeepers as well, and by seeking questions and topics to be covered in advance on a joining form, could be largely student-led. HW commented that if it runs at the same time, it could come into competition with the BCA course and with Rob Nickless's course, which costs £65. CB felt we need to establish a break even number of participants to ensure it is self-financing, and MM noted we'd have to move very fast if it were to start in January 2016.

Decision: The committee agreed with MM that it is a very good idea in principle and worth pursuing. MM was asked to provide the committee with a plan outlining the financials/ breakeven numbers, a proposed syllabus and course material.

Action: MM, by approx. 11th November

- CB is aware the Services document now needs updating, and will do so by the end of next week.

Action: CB, by 14th November

17. Date of next meeting:

Wednesday 3rd February 2016, Woodcote Community Centre, 7.30pm

SUPPLEMENT

**Tuesday 17th November 2015
Woodcote Community Centre**

The committee discussed appropriate changes required to make the Summer Experience and apiary meetings into more valuable training events, and the setting up of a winter beginners' theory training course.

1. Summer Experience

Everyone agreed that Reg's long and varied experience of the art of beekeeping is an invaluable resource, so we need to make the best possible use of his expertise. He set up the apiary and the summer experience course to keep people interested in their bees. As a practical course it would be improved by better engaging attendees, and this could be achieved by having four other demonstrators who would carry out the hive inspections in smaller groups, with Reg acting as the expert consultant, moving between the groups as necessary. Demonstrators could, as in current practice, be drawn from our own experienced members, but the pool could be expanded to include those at Basic Assessment level, who would be appropriate people to help beginners, as well as offering an opportunity for their own development. It should truly be practical, with attendees having the opportunity to handle bees themselves, given appropriate conditions, and keeping hive records to encourage best practice. All of this would be under Reg's expert guidance, with use of the loudspeaker to facilitate audible communication and engagement of the group.

Action: Margaret and Duncan to discuss with Reg

2. Apiary meetings

Similarly, at apiary meetings we are fortunate often to have large attendances; we don't want to restrict numbers, but to make the meetings more informative, someone - for example, a committee member - should always use the loudspeaker to communicate with and manage a crowd so that everyone gets the benefit of the learning experience. Meetings should always start with a welcome and a risk management conversation, and the apiary owner could be invited to carry out the inspection if s/he is willing, with advice and guidance from Reg, and again with someone using the loudspeaker to ensure everyone can stay focussed and engaged.

Action: Margaret and Duncan to discuss with Reg

3. Beginners' winter training course

Reg and Kate have offered to run a 5-week theory evening course from the end of January. Although the timing is very tight, it should be possible, provided:

- the committee can be provided with the syllabus content/headings, as it will be under the SCBKA banner
- the costings can be shown to be self-financing
- the issue of copyright is addressed to ensure SCBKA is not compromised
- we have time to advertise it in the local press as well as within the Federation and BBKA
- we can agree a backup presenter to cover any unexpected absences

The course would be open to anyone, with part of the fee being an associate membership fee for non-members, and could be a good recruitment opportunity. A course fee of £50 per head was agreed.

John offered practical help with prints, uploads, etc; Caroline and Helen offered help with copyright; Margaret offered to attend the whole course to provide practical support on the night.

Action: Margaret to discuss with Reg and Kate, and call in help from committee members as needed.

4. Accounts

Bob reported the accounts are finalised and audited.

5. Library

Sue will contact members with a library book recall in preparation for Helen taking over the role of Librarian.

6. Thankyou vouchers

Margaret will organise thankyou gift vouchers for the outgoing chairman and librarian, and we will offer life membership to Tim Selwyn for his many years of service.

Action: Margaret