



# St Albans & District Beekeepers Association

**Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2023 @ 7.30pm**  
**Christ Church**  
**New Greens**  
**AL3 6DJ**

1	<p>Present – Julian Griffiths (Chair), Les Riley (Treasurer), Kyle Riley, Richard Tavener, Alison Holloway, Caroline Williams, Cath Robinson-Card, Andy Crossley, Adrian Small.</p> <p>Apologies – Stuart White, Simon Morriss, Richard Peterson, Patrick Maxwell, Richard Grimwade.</p>
2	<p>Approval of minutes Proposed - Richard Tavener Seconded – Alison Holloway</p>
3	<p>Matters arising None at this time</p>
4	<p>Chair's report</p> <p>View from the Chair July 2023</p> <p>As a nation, we are renowned for our fascination with the weather -and is it any surprise? Our very dry summer has suddenly become quite wet but this may bring the June gap which in places is well into July to an end. I hear reports of large crops coming in from some areas while a nuc at my home has a feeder on it to stave off starvation.</p> <p>We have been out and about since the last committee meeting and I would like to start by congratulating the public events team and members for the prize for our trade stand at the Herts Show. Second place this year means we will have to go bigger and better in 2024 and try to win first.</p> <p>The Schools day organised by the Hertfordshire Agricultural Society (in part with funds raised from the Herts Show) doubled in size this year with 1,006 year 6 children attending. While separate tents instead of a big marquee made hearing questions much easier, the teachers were allowed to choose which activities the children saw. We clearly can't compete with the dancing dolly of the sheep show or a tractor ride and did not see all 1,006 attendees. Thank you to the members attending.</p> <p>I would also like to thank Richard Grimwade for his talk at the Varroa training hosted at Oaklands.</p> <p>Fascinating to hear how comprehensive his varroa management is and how many toys he has to combat the mite. I would like to discuss whether we should treat earlier than we have been under AoB. Perhaps as soon as the supers come off to give colonies the best chance to build up.</p> <p>It is good to see Training sessions taking off again and we have one more session to go with Labelling on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September at Prae Wood. I received an email this morning asking if we could add preparing for a honey show to this. I have not had time to go back to Anne</p>

	<p>Wingate. For next year I have a couple of ideas of Food Hygiene and Allergens -and we may be able to volunteer our own Environmental Health Officer, Karen Winfield to present. Looking forward to the end of the year we need to get a couple of things finished like the education boards and the website. With Andy Crossley stepping down from Training we also need to set a date and a structure for the Bee Awareness Day and gather some volunteers. We also need to discuss succession planning for positions within the Association. I am mindful it is usually the same hands doing all the heavy lifting and therefore propose that we actively build a succession plan much as we have with the next Chair -assuming the members will have Mr Tavener!</p> <p>We need Assistant Apiary Managers, Members willing to present at training sessions to form a Training Team and I am still keen that we have more than Richard Grimwade struggling to deal with all the school enquiries. I suggest we start with formalising any current assistance - and if nobody is in place we go and ask some likely candidates.</p>
5	<p>Secretary's report</p> <p>Provisionally booked Christ Church Hall for Sat 11th November in the evening for our annual Honey competition. I will run the competition again this year. Hopefully I will be able to confirm the date in early July. – Date confirmed.</p> <p>Gary Davis, a photographer known to us, wants to shoot more close ups of the bees at Oaklands - we have a signed agreement that we can use his images free of charge, if we acknowledge his copyright.</p> <p>Sadly, no takers to talk to the womens' group in Park Street on a Wednesday night at 8pm. I've offered to do this in the Autumn.</p> <p>Offer of Heritage fruit tree BBKA to celebrate 150 years voted to accept a tree, if this initiative goes ahead. We will try to plant the tree at one of our Apiaries.</p> <p>A good recommendation for a holiday novel. I've just finished this; "the history of bees" by Maja Lunde, a Norwegian author - it's a three-part story set in Hertfordshire in 1851, America 2007 and China 2098 - I'm back on 17th August.</p>
6	<p>Treasurer's report</p> <p style="text-align: center;">St Albans &amp; District Beekeepers Association</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Treasurer's Report for committee meeting on 20/7/2023 written on 19/7/2023</p> <p>Our current bank balance is £12085.19 as at time of writing this report on 19/7/2023</p> <p>To date our membership stands at: 131 full, 14 country &amp; 4 juniors. An increase of 3 full members, 2 country members.</p> <p>There have been no notifications from the BBKA that they will be increasing the capitation fees for next year, &amp; I propose we also do not increase our membership fees either. Should they make a late notification that they are to increase their fees, I propose the association absorbs this increase.</p> <p>I would also like to propose to the committee that we introduce the 'Partner Membership'. This will allow those members who live at the same address where either both are full members to save money &amp; if one is a country member but is active with their partner in beekeeping to have the benefit of full membership (Public Liability Insurance). The partner member must reside at the same address as the full member &amp; only one partner member per full member is allowed. Bee Disease Insurance is to be covered by the Full Member for all</p>

hives. I propose a membership fee of £20 be charged (made up – BBKA = £13.50, HBKA = £2, St Albans & District BKA = £4.50)

If agreed by the committee, I will take our proposition to the trustees for amendment of the Exec Committee Charter & notify the membership.

***It was agreed to introduce the Partner Membership.***

I will order more fondant in September ready for the winter. We still have a good stock of syrup

Varroa treatments for this year – we currently have 6 in stock of Formic Pro. Last year I ordered a total of 300 treatments, so was looking to order another 210 treatments (7 boxes of 30). Thornes had advised on their website that the 10 & 30 dose packs will not be available until the autumn, however they have now changed their website when looking today stating they will not be available until 2024 which is concerning. We need a backup on what treatments we are going to use. One option is VarroMed, which is a trickle treatment over as little as 1 week or a few weeks, it's a mixture of Formic Acid & Oxalic Acid dihydrate. The strength can be adjusted to suit the colony size & can also penetrate sealed brood.

***An update on the availability of treatments to follow to the membership in due course.***

I have been approached by Joanne Clarke with the following email on 29/6/2023

*Hi Les*

*Hope you're enjoying the good weather & finally, a little rain!*

*I understand that Guy Parker did not wish to continue with Hives for All from the 2022 team.*

*I suggested to Andy that I might be able*

*buy the hive however it all needed cleaning & all the dead bees removed (unfortunately the bees all died - maybe starvation). Some of the frames & wax had to be destroyed*

*Unless you have already sold the hive to AN Other, perhaps I could buy the hive at 20% discount (to account for cleaning & removing dead bees). I don't think I need to buy the Nuc at this stage.*

*I believe hive, stand & frames were £310, so with 20% discount, I would be happy to purchase for £248.*

*Please let me know your thoughts*

*Kind regards*

*Joanne*

*07903 720119*

I responded that we will discuss at this committee meeting as it's not a decision I can make alone. The hive handed back was from Guy Young, not Guy Parker.

***It was agreed by the committee not to sell this kit, but utilise it as part of the queen rearing project at Prae Wood***

I've also received the following email from Guy Young on 12/7/2023

*Dear Sir/Madam.*

*I have recently attended the starters course for the association.*

*I would like to join the association, and going forward join the 'Hives for all scheme' where I will buddy up with Agnieszka Broszk.*

*Please can you therefore send me the necessary documentation to proceed with this.*

*My mobile number is 07766 292479.*

*Kind regards.*

*Guy Young.*

Checking back on the records, Guy Young handed back the hive from the 2022 scheme, & his membership lapsed this year.

Before responding to his email, I felt his request should be discussed with the committee as we currently have no policy regarding the Hives for All scheme.

***It was agreed that we can offer Guy Young membership, but not a position on the Hives for All Scheme in the future as he had already been on the scheme the last year & no longer wished to continue & returned the kit. The scheme is for those who have attended the beginners course that year or had showed their commitment by attending the apiaries each week observing & helping before committing themselves to a colony of bees.***

Here end the treasurers report for this meeting

7

Education and training:

(Simon Morriss)

I have started a self-study group for the basic assessment. 7 people have signed up ready to start studying when things become less frantic at the hives. We will then go for the assessment in 2024.

(Andy Crossley)

Training Report – July 2023

### **Hives For All 2023**

The six Hives For All people have settled in well with their colonies and mentors at Prae Wood and Oaklands. Most people have managed to attend most Saturdays, with the occasional absence being made up on another day in the week with the support of the mentor.

All now have bees from various sources. Some are building nicely from nucs, while others who have been given swarms are already well under way with two and in one case three supers being filled. One beginner has already experienced the delights of their bees swarming, a good learning opportunity for them..

### **Healthy Bee Day**

Herts BKA organised a Healthy Bee Day on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> June. This was hosted by SABKA at the Links Academy School (thank-you to David Allen again for the use of his facilities) and at the Oaklands apiary. The majority of the attendees were from SABKA. Slightly disappointing was

	<p>the 8 no-shows on the day. Although the weather forecast was not great, the day went well without any problem weather wise.</p> <p>The classroom presentations were done by BBKA Assessor Simon Rice, and after a break for lunch, he and Seasonal Bee Inspector Peter Folge lead the apiary session, with plenty of interesting information and insights being passed on. Many people commented on how interesting and informative the day had been.</p> <p><b>Apiary teaching</b></p> <p>The short weekly refresher talks at Oaklands on Saturday afternoons have been well received, and nicely compliment the organised apiary talks that alternate between Prae Wood and Oaklands. So far the talks have been on Drone-laying Queens, Laying Workers and Queen Cells.</p> <p><b>Future training</b></p> <p>Training enquiries continue to come in via the website. Simon Morriss is away at present, but on his return we will be starting to put together the plans for the Bee Awareness session in the Autumn, and next year's Beginners Course.</p>
8	<p>Public events report</p> <p>Events report for meeting of 20/7/23</p> <p>The Herts Show (27<sup>th</sup> &amp; 28<sup>th</sup> May) went well. We won second prize in the Trade Stand competition. Aylett's provided a good selection of plants to decorate the stall and the honey sales went well, netting £2409. The Observation hive attracted a good deal of attention, as usual. Kyle provided some updated information and photos for the display boards, but we are still waiting for the final display.</p> <p>Harpenden Carnival (17<sup>th</sup> June) was a good event, with the Observation hive attracting plenty of attention and honey sales of £738.</p> <p>Cath Robinson and Richard Grimwade also had a stall at Skyeswood School Fete on 17<sup>th</sup> June and this also went well.</p> <p>Oaklands held their summer fair on 1<sup>st</sup> July. This felt quieter than usual, but it was a pleasant afternoon and honey sales were £271.</p> <p>Luke Adams &amp; Robin Guest ran a stall at the Shenley Fete on 2<sup>nd</sup> July.</p> <p>The Primary Schools Day on 4<sup>th</sup> July was an opportunity to talk to school children about bees and their role. It was a few busy hours, with plenty of noise and enthusiastic searching for the queens. We had two Observation hives and plenty of material displayed, so hopefully some of them took in a few additional facts.</p> <p>The Zettle card reader is working well and the process of paying out to the membership is quite straightforward. I have spreadsheets showing money in, fees and money out. Does the committee want to see these?</p> <p>Our new gazebo cover and banner are looking good.</p> <p>We are getting to the end of our events programme. There may be an Apple Day at Oaklands later on, but nothing has been confirmed as yet. Some events that we have been to previously are not being run this year, so if anyone is aware of any that we might like to attend, please let me know.</p> <p>Alison Holloway 9/7/2023</p>
9	<p>HBKA report</p> <p>Nothing to report at this time.</p>

10 Apiary Business.

### **Prae Wood**

Report for Prae Wood for July 20<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting.

PLEASE accept my apologies for not submitting a report for the last committee meeting, to be frank I fell victim to a couple of health issues that laid me low for a while and then life just got in the way and I didn't get round to writing it.

Things at Prae are really looking up at the moment. Besides the grass needing a mow it is really good to see the shed being used more in the fashion that it was a few years back with members finding the time to enjoy some refreshments and chat among themselves as in times past.

I must now report that our queen rearing project has really taken off thanks to Calin Satmareanu whose knowledge, that he is prepared to pass on to us, is invaluable and also to Les Riley who has taken on the many tasks involved running the project and this involves him in many trips to the apiary during the week. I must on behalf of all at Prae thank him for his efforts and enthusiasm.

Last Saturday it brought it home to me what an asset it is to have queens being reared on the site. It definitely changes your thinking. To illustrate the point we had some extremely aggressive bees here, and so it was possible to remove the queens there and then, and to replace them with already mated queens with the minimum of disruption to the colonies. Another example is that possibly through carelessness an unmarked queen was dispatched during an attempt to mark her and as we had some spare mated queens available its replacement was not a problem.

Finally, I report that we have two outstanding projects still to be completed. The first is the construction of a wheeled dolly to help with getting the mower in and out of the shed and the second is the erection of the new toilet shed both of which must wait until there is a break from our weekly hive inspections and mentoring.

Richard Peterson - Apiary manager Prae Wood

### **Queen Rearing Project at Prae Wood**

The queen rearing has been quite eventful,

1<sup>st</sup> grafting session, 9 cells drawn out of 20, 5 queens emerged & have all successfully mated.

2<sup>nd</sup> grafting session, 40 grafts, none were drawn. Only one explanation could be the reason, the colony is Q+

Upon a thorough investigation, eggs were found, the task of then looking for a queen was undertaken, not an easy task with the colony being absolutely crammed full with bees. A queen was eventually found. The colony was merged with the colony below, then re-split a week later to continue with a 3<sup>rd</sup> grafting session.

3<sup>rd</sup> grafting session, 18 cells drawn, but only 7 queens emerged. 6 have been placed in nucs & one left in the colony to be mated.

Next year we are looking to move the colonies to their own part of the apiary as along with the grumpy bees, I feel that as the colony is so crammed full with bees, they are too close to the shed & we end up with a lot of flying bees around that area

Les Riley

### **Oaklands**

Oaklands update (quite short, as there isn't a lot to report):

The summer season has continued well and we have good numbers of beekeepers

attending. Equally of note us that the apiary has regained its "club" atmosphere which it somewhere lost towards the end of last year. As always, the bees have provided plenty of "entertainment" with one swarm in particular refusing to stay in the accommodation that was generously provided for it. The apiary still has the normal mix of first- and second-year beekeepers, with the normal spread of ability and aptitude.

This has been the first season in which we have run a series of short talks at 2pm most Saturdays to try to impart a common set of knowledge to everyone and maintain a good standard of beekeeping. So far, this has gone well and seems to have been appreciated.

And, as always, we are grateful for the continuing support from Anne Wingate BEM!

Adrian Small – Apiary manager Oaklands

**Chalkdell Social Apiary.**

The Chalkdell Out Apiary is up and running.

We have two current beekeepers and 5 hives on the site. There is a third interested party, who has (as of now) yet to move in any stock.

The area regrows quite aggressively, as it's been carved out of a field of nettles and weeds.

We have purchased a cordless electric heavy-duty strimmer with two batteries to help keep the apiary tidy and the weeds away from the hives. Care must be taken to keep as much of the existing growth, especially at the rear of the apiary, as the estate raises game birds who use the growth as cover and feeding. The last strim was the weekend of the 8/9 July. I plan to strim again the week of the 7th of August, probably mid-week.

The site seems good for the bees, and the inspections on my 3 hives seems to show apparent success and growth.

The one caution for the site is that the foundation was a rubbish burning site, and the ground is uneven and contains some visible debris. The beekeeper needs to use caution when moving around as there are unexpected pits and obstacles. One future plan could be to find waste soil, fine rubble, sand, or other filler to help even out the ground around and between the stands, especially the walking paths.

There are no currently supplied stand at the apiary, and the current tenants have provided their own. Due to the uneven ground, simple concrete slabs are not enough. At least one bag of sharp sand or ballast is required to level the ground under the slab before use. If the association chooses to supply these, it would be at an estimated cost of £15 - £20 each for this style of stand.

Admin that needs to be done for the site is a compiled list of the current tenants, their phone numbers and car reg plates. Currently this has been done on an ad hoc basis, but needs collating into one place.

Adam Buckner – Chalkdell Social apiary

	<p><b>Website Report</b></p> <p>The website is now live on <a href="http://sabka.co.uk">sabka.co.uk</a>. The members area and shop are functional. I have spent time over the past few weeks adding content and working on responsive layouts for mobile and tablet. More work to be done here.</p> <p>We are now hosted by LCN who provide free hosting and 10 free email addresses for non-profits. (<i>Association emails will be moved to LCN in due course away from Google</i>) We have to pay for SSL (web security) which is £72 incl VAT across 2 years, and will also need to pay around £50 per year for Elementor Pro, the web builder service on Wordpress.</p> <p>In early August we will transition over to <a href="http://stalbansbees.org">stalbansbees.org</a></p> <p><b>Content Call</b></p> <p>To discuss what kinds of resources we want to display for members and beekeepers in general. i.e. beekeeping calendar, bee development chart etc.</p> <p><b>Blog</b></p> <p>Do committee members see any value in a blog? This would bring people back to the site regularly and increase traffic. The blog can be a simple update on your beekeeping year, a story about something that went right or wrong, or a summary and opinion on research you may have read. In short, anything beekeeping related.</p> <p>All sabka members would be invited to contribute, and we could publish a new blog post at least monthly, maybe more frequently. We could even invite guest blog posts from notable beekeepers.</p> <p><b><i>It was agreed to defer the blog for review at a later date</i></b></p> <p><b>Adobe Stock Images</b></p> <p>To discuss whether there is an appetite to pay for stock images.</p> <p>£330 for 80 Images</p> <p>High quality images for the website and display boards</p> <p><b><i>It was agreed to contact various organisations for suitable Hi-Res quality images to use on the website &amp; display boards. Caroline Williams has offered some of her photos for use.</i></b></p>
12	<p>Update on Out Apiaries: Nothing to report at this time.</p>
12	<p>A.O.B.</p> <p>Equipment for hire – Richard Tavener: <b><i>Request to be put to the membership of items for the association to purchase &amp; then hire to the members – Items to be discussed at a future committee meeting.</i></b></p> <p>Questions from Cath Robinson-Card:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Date for the Varroa treatments – mentioned by Julian at the Oaklands chat but no decision was made, I am not sure how much time Les requires to organise the correct amount of treatments needed. Do we need to set a date? <b><i>Date to be set by Apiary managers as soon as flow is over/August time</i></b></li> <li>2. As per a chat with Julian &amp; Les at the HCS about a “corporate” bee club T-shirt – Something to plan ready for 2024?</li> </ol>

	<p><b><i>This was agreed to be a good idea as members would be more visible to the members of the public, also make available to be purchased on the website to members. Further investigations to be carried out.</i></b></p> <p>3. Status of the education boards - also if we intend to do more schools will they suitable for both a younger and older audience?  <b><i>Progress is being made on the education boards &amp; will be suitable for both younger &amp; older generations.</i></b></p> <p>4. I would be interested to hear how Les has got on with his Queen rearing  <b><i>Please see update in Apiary Business.</i></b></p> <p>5. Does anyone have the template of the “St. Albans Beekeepers log book” we thought about giving it a bit of an update and then maybe Kyle could add the new logo or provide a copy? This could be used in conjunction with our 2pm Oaklands chats especially for the HVA  <b><i>Original created by Richard Peterson, copy supplied by Adrian Small for reference.</i></b></p>
13	<p>Date of next meetings:  Committee Meeting - 21<sup>st</sup> September 2023  Committee Meeting - 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023  4<sup>th</sup> Open Meeting @ Prae Wood – 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2023 – Honey Jar Labelling (Caroline Williams)  Winter Meeting – October Date? Presentation? <b><i>Proposed date – 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023 pending hall availability &amp; Anne Wingate to be approached on giving a talk on her beekeeping journey to receiving her Medal of the Order of the British Empire in the King’s Birthday Honours for services to beekeeping.</i></b>  Honey Tasting Evening 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023 @ 7.30pm (Christ Church New Greens AL3 6DJ)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Meeting Closed @ 21.53</p>