

Chair's Report – BBA –2024 AGM – January 24th, 2024

It's not too late to wish everyone a very Happy New Year, and here's to the new challenges in beekeeping which may arise in 2024, as a result of our warmer spring/summers and very wet winters.

I want to start with a very big thank you to all of the BBA members who have given up their time in the last year to help at events, and to all of the Committee members who have devoted their time and energy to helping to run the BBA, some of which are standing down this year.

We thank Martin Stainer, Membership Secretary, who has done an excellent job over his 4 years on the Committee, maintaining the records and helping members to join and be a part of our organisation, and more thanks to David Macadam – another long term BBA member, and who has enthusiastically volunteered with our Education events at the Countryside Day, and many other public events to further the cause of Beekeeping.

The remaining Committee are continuing for another year, I am very pleased to say, as having a range of experienced hands, and new people is excellent. We do need people to join the Committee this year, even if you do not want a designated role, but I will be trying to actively recruit.

We rely on all members, especially Officers and Committee members to volunteer their time to carry out various and often time consuming tasks, such as updating the website, and regrettably some updates and tasks can take longer to complete. We all have busy lives, and we appreciate every hour volunteered, by everyone, and do remember that "Everything matters. Time is precious"

My final thank you is to Fiona Hawke, our stalwart Secretary, who keeps me, in particular, on point, and the rest of the Committee, up to date, recording our actions, and doing a terrific job of booking in our speakers, as well as Course bookings, and the meeting and event admin – which is considerable. We all thank you for your efficiency and good cheer throughout this last year Fiona.

Our speakers last year included the new SBA President, Matthew Richardson, talking about bee genetics, which prompted a vibrant member discussion over tea afterwards at Smailholm.

Smailholm Hall has proved to be a very good venue for our meetings, and although not completely central for east and west members, is comfortable and very well appointed. It also became the venue for our wonderfully attended Honey Show, which was held there for the first time in November, Judged by the renowned Honey Judge Enid ??????and was declared a great success.

We had another great set of beginners courses, and in June, we had a very educational apiary visit, hosted at Kate Atchley's with bee handling help from Julie McDairmid, where many witnessed the marking of new queens and witnessed best practice on handling bees.

We are lucky enough to have Willie Robson's Chain Bridge Honey Farm just over the Border, and we had the benefit of an Association visit in August to the Honey Farm. We had a really wonderful talk from Willie, and the most sumptuous of tea's hosted by Daphne as well as a tour of the whole facility including the beeswax candle making room.

These two quotes from beginners who had not heard him talk before, continue to resonate with me:

- "I love his attitude towards the bees – treating them with utmost respect and as an equal – this is close to my heart. So often in farming, as you expand and deal with big livestock

numbers some of this stops happening, but so pleased this is still at the forefront of his work and business”

- “His wealth of knowledge and experience struck a chord with me. That they operate as one organism, and knowledge is passed through the hive, and so have a hive memory. He emphasised observation and getting to know your bees as key”

As I have done each year – I would like to close by asking for volunteers – both for events throughout 2024, such as the Countryside day, where nearly 500 children came to learn a bit about honeybees, and also to take part in the Committee. Please step forward.

I know from talking with many of you during tea at our meetings, that there is so much talent amongst us: and so do please share yours, and keep looking out for ideas for speakers to invite for future meetings.

Alison Ramcharran

Chair