

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2025

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Branch website: www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk



Sharing the Glory



Tim Johnston was presented with a second cup as overall points winner

The Annual General Meeting and prize-giving took place at Weald Village Hall in November. For the first time at the branch honey show, 11 trophies were awarded to 11 different entrants. In his chairman's report, Cliff Hayward said it had been a busy year, starting with the Introduction to Beekeeping and Basic Beekeeping courses. He said the hands-on training at the club's two apiaries was invaluable for beginners but said experienced beekeepers could also add to their knowledge and urged more members to attend meetings at Hilbert Road and Barrwood. Branch representatives were busy during the year attending public events to highlight beekeeping and the danger posed by the Yellow-legged Asian hornet. Cliff said the Honey Show and Craft Fair was a success with a record number of entries. He offered special thanks to John Farrow, who has been responsible for our website since its inception. After many years, John is retiring from the post.

The treasurer, Liz Birchenough, said the finances were healthy. Most of the income is from subscriptions but the majority goes immediately to the Kent Beekeepers Association. The KBKA county treasurer aggregates all the Kent branch accounts and has brought in new measures relating to the depreciation of trophies. Many branches had very high values for trophies that were unrealistic, so the accounts show a higher level of depreciation than in previous years.

The branch officials were elected as follows:

Chair: Cliff Hayward

Vice-chair: Martin Barrett

Secretary: Tim Johnston

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Liz Birchenough

Committee Members: Liz Seal (Minute Secretary); Bob Blair; Sue Knights; Paddy Green.

KBKA Council representatives: Cliff Hayward; Sue Knights.

This year the Chairman's Cup went to Pauline Hayward. Cliff said: "She's going to be mad at me for this." But, he said, his wife had always supported him with beekeeping even though she was reluctant to get involved at the beginning. Pauline also does a great job organising the teas and coffees for our indoor meetings.



Pauline receives the Chairman's Cup

Asian Hornet Appeal

The branch's two Asian hornet coordinators, Sue Knights and Martin Barrett, appealed for more help to try to track the insects. Sue said that most people who took traps seemed to put them out and forget about them. However, there were two examples of members of the public finding out about the hornets at a public event and then reporting positive sightings. In one case someone spotted a Yellow-legged Asian hornet close to the railway line at Tunbridge Wells and, as a result, a nest was discovered by the track and destroyed.

A Branch dinner and quiz night is being planned for January. Details will be emailed directly to members.

Wanted: Library Volunteer

We have a small library of bee-related books available to members. We would like a volunteer to look after the box of books and keep the register of loans. The box is not huge and can be carried by one person. If you think you could manage this, get in touch with Liz Birchenough: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

A New Look for Our Website



If you haven't taken a look at our website (www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk) recently, please spend a little time visiting and seeing our refreshed look. With a new layout and format, you will find everything you need as before, although some topics might be in a new place or with a different heading.

The idea to look at our branch website started to develop at the beginning of the year as I felt it portrayed the branch in a rather staid and old-fashioned way, which I thought could be improved. There were also a few areas that, owing to the passage of time, needed to be replaced or updated.

The site had been ably managed by John Farrow for a number of years and, after a chat, he felt it time to pass on the task of a makeover and update. I agreed to have a go and started the exercise with no web building experience whatsoever. Over the last couple of months, and with help from ChatGPT, I got to grips with the software for building a website. I must also give a shout out to our branch member Lesley Olley, of Olley Designs, who kindly volunteered to assist and gave valuable advice, pointing me in the right direction and answering my numerous questions.

The results are now published for the world to see, so please take a look. Although I've checked the site for problems, spelling mistakes, etc., there will inevitably be one or two things that have slipped through the net. If you find any errors, links not working, or feel something new should be added/something changed please do let me know – nothing is too trivial. I'm also keen to publish more of our members' photographs in the future so do send them in for consideration. Contact me at secretary@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Tim Johnston

Christmas and New Year Gifts

Don't forget we have honey available for those last-minute gifts, £7.50 for a 1lb jar, and £6.50 for a 12oz jar. We have some places available on the Introduction to Beekeeping courses in the New Year. Please contact me for details: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Liz Birchenough

*Send photos or articles for the newsletter to: newsletter@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk
Go to our website for all the latest beekeeping news: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>*