

**October 2009- September 2010  
ANNUAL REPORT  
OF THE**



**SWINDON & DISTRICT  
BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

**A BRANCH OF THE  
WILTSHIRE BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

**A MEMBER OF THE  
BRITISH BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION**

Our Association has two basic aims:

- (1) To assist our members with their beekeeping, and
- (2) To help the public understand better what honeybees are and what beekeepers do.

This report for the period Oct'2009 to Sept'2010 reflects the extent to which our Association has pursued and continues to pursue these aims. Our Association has increased in membership very substantially during the past four years. Likewise, interest by the public in honeybees and beekeeping has also increased. Your Committee with help from many of you has endeavoured to meet the demands arising from this.

## S&DBKA COMMITTEE 2009-2010

<b>President:</b>	Ron Hoskins*		
<b>Chairperson:</b>	Dennis Simpson	<b>Vice-Chair:</b>	unfilled
<b>Secretary:</b>	Sue Harris	<b>Membership:</b>	Sue Harris
<b>Treasurer:</b>	Clive Harris	<b>Training:</b>	Ross Gregory**
<b>Publicity:</b>	unfilled	<b>Webmaster:</b>	Bob Berry
<b>Committee:</b>	Peter Hinton	Bryan Hopper	
	Lu Haynes	Mike Hall	

\*~ Ron is also the Swarm Coordinator and Spray Liaison Officer

\*\*~ Ross is also the Apiary Manager and the Librarian

Your Committee has found it necessary to meet about every 6 to 7 weeks throughout the year. All meetings have been hosted by Clive and Sue Harris. Routine items for discussion and decision include:

- Programme of winter meetings
- Programme of summer meetings
- Financial management
- Planning presence of S&DBKA at local events
- Involvement with local initiatives that promote greater awareness of honeybees ~ this has been a quantum leap (more later).

### MEETINGS VENUE

We have continued to be lucky to be able to hold our winter meetings at the Haydon Wick Club. This year, the Club has also been used for a series of training evenings based on DVDs. We encourage all members who attend meetings at the Haydon Club to support their bar, since we do not pay a hire fee. If we had to pay a fee to the Club or elsewhere then your subscription to the Association would need to be greater. We make a small donation of honey to be included in their Christmas Raffle and provide members of the bar staff with the occasional jar of honey. We are most grateful to the Club for accommodating us.

### APIARY

Our apiary at TWIGS has again been used frequently for regular 'Apiary Skills' sessions, our 'Starting Beekeeping' courses and 'Introduction to Beekeeping' courses. Additionally, we have been present as usual at the Spring and Summer TWIGS Open Days. The yield of honey this year was again poor.

### WEBSITE

Bob Berry has continued to be webmaster since setting up our website in 2006

## CLOTHING

Dennis & Joy Simpson have continued to organise a supply of club sweatshirts and polo shirts.

## MEETINGS & EVENTS PROGRAMME

**Winter Meetings** during the past year were:

September:	Branch Annual Honey Show
October:	AGM
November:	Bees eye view of beekeeping~ Andy Willis
December:	Skittles evening ~ Skep Trophy won by Bryan Hopper
January	Beekeeping with skeps~ Chris Park
March	Discussion~ ‘Are you ready’.
March	Bees and other beneficiaries in the garden~ Roger Upelby

**Annual Dinner:** Our annual dinner in February was held at The Tawny Owl, Swindon. The pub suited us well. Chris Park said grace a druid’s way. Ron Hoskins brought along an Australian visitor who gave us a brief after dinner talk.

### **Summer Socials:**

BBQ at Stanton ~ very successful with catering organised by Peter & Ann Hinton  
Tea & Cake at Dauntsey Lock ~ by invitation of Rachael Banyard, but unfortunately very poorly attended.

## COMMUNICATIONS

**Membership List:** This is our most important asset. Sue Harris maintains it with great efficiency. The list is grouped to distinguish full members, associate members, ‘friends’ of S&DBKA and others interested in beekeeping.

**Newsletters:** Newsletters are sent to all on the membership list. There is a newsletter about every month during the winter and a little less frequently during the summer. The newsletters have been prepared by Dennis Simpson in conjunction with Sue Harris. Four WBKA Honey Bee Times have been distributed to full members during the year as well as the Wilts Yearbook (which is prepared by Ross Gregory who is also the WBKA membership contact with BBKA)..

**Other Notices:** Members also receive occasional email notifications and reminders from Sue, some of which originate from other members.

## NEW INITIATIVES & COMMITMENTS

**National Trust Coleshill:** The NT selected Coleshill as one of their sites for the ‘Bee Part of It’ initiative. They approached us through Ron Hoskins to select a suitable site and provide the training and mentoring. As a consequence four residents of Coleshill have been trained and are now included in our membership.

**Marlborough College:** The College has embarked upon keeping bees. Clive Harris has taken on the challenge of being their trainer and mentor. One of the masters is

the College's registered beekeeper with us and we expect him to pursue his beekeeping studies in our courses.

As a consequence of this initiative by the College, they approached us to collaborate in offering beekeeping as one of the courses in their Summer School. The one-week course was substantially over-subscribed and was very successful with the hands-on sessions being held at Ron's Apiary in Stanton Park. Ron was assisted with the instruction by Ron Hill, Clive Harris and Dennis Simpson. It is probable that more than one course will be listed in 2011.

**Burt's Bees Hives @ Lydiard Park:** Burt's Bees is an American company with their UK headquarters in Swindon. They chose to support greater awareness in honeybees by sponsoring two colonies at Lydiard Park. These are sited in the walled garden there and are being looked after by Clive Harris and Bryan Hopper.

## **PROMOTIONAL EVENTS**

Committee members during the year have stands at local events and give talks to local clubs and to schools:

### **Local Events:**

TWIGS Spring Open Day: Ross Gregory's Team

Highworth Medieval Day: Ross Gregory's Team

Stanton Park ~ BBC Wild day-out family event: Ron Hoskins, Dennis Simpson & teams.

TWIGS Summer Open Day: Ross Gregory's Team

Pentylands Park: Ron Hoskins and Ron Hill

Coleshill (NT) Food Fair: Ross Gregory

Coleshill Peace Day: Ron Hoskins and Ron Hill

Wichelstowe Canal Day: Dennis Simpson, Peter Hinton and team.

### **Talks to Clubs:**

Aldbourne Gardening Club: Ron Hoskins instructed a small group of their members keen to start beekeeping before they joined our branch.

Ross Gregory: South Marston Gardening Club and Swindon Rotary

Ron has given talks locally and further afield: Newbury BKA, North Cotswold BKA, Kennet BKA, Bishopstone Gardening Club, Brinkworth Gardening Club, Wantage BKA, Minety WI, NHS Retirement Fellowship and Oxford BKA

**School visits:** Schools that have received presentations this year include:

Red Oaks Primary: Sue Harris, Bryan Hopper, Joy and Dennis Simpson and Peter Hinton

Swindon Academy (Penhill campus), Darwin Days (years 6 & 7): Ross Gregory

## S&DBKA: CLASSES OF MEMBERSHIP

Class of member	Membership additional to S&DBKA	Benefits additional to S&DBKA Newsletter & Handbook
Full	WBKA, BBKA	Bee Diseases Ins for 3 colonies WBKA HoneyBee Times, BBKA News, BBKA Indemnity & Third Party Ins.
Associate	None	none*
Honorary	None	none*

- Associate and Honorary members can vote on S&DBKA business at our AGM and SGMs

### Membership fees for 2009-2010:

Full Member: £29, which includes BDI for 3 colonies, and capitations for WBKA and BBKA

Associate Member: £9

**Membership:** The 2010 season finished with

Full Members	88
Partner Members	4
Associate Members	79 (This large number arises because all who attend our courses are registered as Associates if they are not already a member.)
Honorary Members	1

## FINANCIAL

The audited accounts were presented at the AGM. A copy can be obtained from the Treasurer, Clive Harris. The apparent health of our accounts arises from the income we did have from honey produced from the TWIGS apiary and more recently from courses, and that for a couple of years we have not had to pay a fee for our winter venue. The following are key points arising:

1. Total income for the accounting period (Oct'09-Sept'10) was £7185 (£5506 for Oct'08-Sept'09) and the total expenditure was £6385 (inclusive of the £2089 write-off of the estimated fixed assets as recommended by the auditor ~ see item 5)(£4052 for Oct'08-Sept'09).
2. Total reconciled assets (Oct'09-Sept'10) stood at £7392, an increase on the previous year of £799 (12%) due essentially to the increased membership and the redoubtable effort of our Training Teams.
3. Membership has increased from 55 Full Members and 56 Associates (2008-2009) to 88 Full Members and 79 Associates (2009-2010).

4. Overall training income rose from £1760 (2008-2009) to £2993 (2009-2010).
5. The overall trading surplus for the year was effectively £2888. The Auditor's advice from the previous audit however, was that we should write off the unreliable estimated value of our Fixed Assets (apiary, cups, books etc, estimated at £2089) so that the Total Reconciled Asset figure (£7392) became an undisputable hard figure provable by Bank Statement. This recommendation was implemented during this accounting period and thus reduced the overall trading surplus to £799.
6. Total assets continue to remain very healthy as long as the membership remains at the current level. Consequently, the Committee decided the Association's component of the membership subscriptions would not be increased. It is hoped that many of our huge Associate Membership will convert to Full Membership in the near future as they acquire their own bee colonies.

### **S&DBKA LIBRARY:**

Ross Gregory has continued to maintain our Association's library which he brings to winter meetings. Members are welcome to take the library home until the next meeting.

### **EQUIPMENT FOR LOAN**

S&DBKA currently has two items of equipment (a 4-frame extractor and an uncapping tray) for loan to members for a nominal charge. Ron Hoskins and Ron Hill have continued to look after this equipment and provide instruction on their use.

### **WILTSHIRE BKA**

**Council Meetings:** Four Council meetings are held each year in Devizes. The WBKA Constitution, partly because of our size, allows us to send 5 representatives to each meeting. This past year our representatives have been Ron Hoskins, Dennis Simpson, Ross Gregory, Sue Harris and Clive Harris. Dennis has been Vice-Chair for the year and Ross has been the BBKA membership coordinator.

**Honeybee Times:** Honey Bee Times, the Wiltshire BKA newsletter, is currently produced four times a year and delivered via our branch Secretary to qualifying members.

**Year Book:** WBKA produces a Year Book which is mainly a directory of all branch full and associate members immediately prior to printing, by which time all who were members the previous year should have renewed their memberships if they are going to do so. Branch secretaries are responsible for their respective lists of members whilst our Ross Gregory compiles the Year Book.

**Autumn Beekeepers Day:** The branches in Wiltshire take turn to organise this event that includes the annual honey show and AGM. Swindon organised it in

October 2009 with great success, with much credit going to Paul Vickery, setting a new high standard for the event. However, Swindon is not that good at entering the County Honey Show.

## TRAINING

Training has become a more important part of our Association's activities because of the dramatic growth in membership. We encourage anyone contemplating taking up beekeeping to first attend the likes of our 1-day 'Introduction to Beekeeping' courses. If they subsequently decide that beekeeping might be for them, we then advise them to attend the likes of our 'Starting Beekeeping' courses and get other hands-on experience such as at our 'Apiary Skills' sessions before obtaining their own bee colonies.

**Mentoring:** When we start beekeeping we find we need to ask help from more experienced beekeepers. These requests for help are often made to Committee members, presumably because of their greater profile. With our rapid growth in membership this mentoring load has also increased. Therefore we are slowly introducing a mentoring scheme drawing upon some of our other reasonably experienced and knowledgeable members, generally those who have gained their BBKA Certificate in Basic Beekeeping. (A list of members who so far have agreed to act as mentors will be prepared for our Association's Handbook.)

**'Introduction to Beekeeping' courses:** Ross Gregory has run five 1-day courses this season. The total attendance has been 54, a number coming from beyond our general catchment area. He has been assisted in turn by Sissel Thomassen, Peter Hinton, Mike Hall, Jo Stratton-Wain and Avril Earl.

Ron has given several informal sessions at Stanton to anyone wishing to have a better understanding about bees and beekeeping.

**'Starting Beekeeping' courses:** Ross has run three 4x Sunday morning courses this season at TWIGS. A total of 19 members have attended the courses.

Ron has run several 4x Saturday morning courses, one 4-weekday course and one 5-weekday course for Marlborough College, A total number of 40 people attended the courses.

By popular demand, Ron ran a 'Honey Extraction Day' at the Ranger's HQ at Stanton Park, This included extraction methods, bottling, labelling and hygiene.

**Apiary Skills sessions @ TWIGS:** Ross has held apiary skills sessions on a regular frequency (nominally every 10 days) from April to August, a total of 13 sessions.

**Apiary Skills sessions @ Stanton:** Ron Hoskins has welcomed members to join him at his Stanton apiary most Saturday mornings and has had a number frequently joining him there.

**DVD Training Sessions:** A set of 9 DVDs was obtained from Derby BKA, one for each month from March to November. Ross held the first two monthly sessions at his home and subsequently at the Haydon Wick Club. Attendance ranged from 7 to 18, including Ross, but normally was about 15 whilst at the Club.

**Annual Apiary Safari:** Ross again organised our apiary safari. Four apiaries were visited in the company of our RBI and SBI. A total of 24 members participated in visiting one or more apiaries. Maureen Bower, Clare Leonard, Mike Hall and Ross in turn welcomed the safari to their apiaries. All hives inspected were given a clean bill of health.

**BBKA Certificate in Basic Beekeeping:** Ross held a series of study group session at his house in February to March for those prepared to enter the Certificate. These members attended some of the apiary skills sessions during the summer. Ross also provided a couple of revision sessions before seven members did the assessment. All seven were successful: congratulations to Stephen Greenaway, Chris Park, Gloria Sim, Bridget Sinclair, Gary Smith, Marilyn Sweet and Sissel Thomasson. This means the number of our current members with the Certificate is 32.

## **SWARM COLLECTION**

Swindon provides the local police and council with a list of six names of key members who are available to collect swarms and Ron Hoskins is our swarm collection coordinator. This year has been a strange year with us being notified of only a few swarms. A possible reason is that the public are referring more to the internet for assistance and find others promoting their service before they find us local beekeepers.

## **SPRAY LIAISON**

Ron Hoskins is our Spray Liaison Officer. He is the person for local farmers and agricultural spraying contractors to phone to advise beekeepers who might be affected. It is for this reason that you are encouraged to state on your annual subscription form where your hives are kept. Should you subsequently change your apiary site then you should inform our Secretary who will advise Ron. During the past season Ron received 7 calls regarding spraying in our area and 35 for the whole of Wiltshire.

## **NBU & BEE BASE**

We encourage all our members who have bee colonies to register on the **NBU Bee Base** website and to keep their entry up to date. A key purpose of Bee Base is to help the Bee Inspectorate know where colonies are for them to efficiently plan their routine summer inspections and to check colonies near to apiaries found to have foul brood and so control its spread.

We have an annual Apiary Safari in which we visit a number of our members' apiaries. A key aspect of the safari is we have our Regional Bee Inspector use it as part of his routine inspections. This year we were pleased to have both our new RBI, Nigel Semmence, and one of our SBIs, Phil Spillane, with us for the safari. Again this year's safari was organised by Ross Gregory.