



KINGSTON BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Chair's Report - AGM 2021

Welcome to the Chair's report prepared for the 142nd AGM of the Kingston Beekeeping Association.

Avis Marshall explains in her Apiary Manager's report that follows that it was a strange start to the beekeeping year and equally strange for KBKA as we continued to provide training and support through virtual meetings. These meetings continued to be successful with diverse topics from Asian Hornets through Food Hygiene regulations to Bees for Development, although it was clear that the support for virtual meetings had began to wane, the term "Zoomed Out" started to be used, especially by those having to work from home and as the restrictions started to ease we concentrated on getting back into the apiary and providing hands on training and experience for some of our members who had newly acquired bees. Working within the guidelines with smaller groups the Saturday afternoon sessions proved to be very popular and sociable events.

There was a surge of interest in beekeeping over lockdown and this has translated into all of our planned courses for the coming year being fully booked. The success of our courses has also led to an increase in membership to 112.

We have renewed our subscription to Zoom and see the future of our meetings being some sort of hybrid version of online and face to face meetings. There is certainly some attraction in being able to attend some meetings without leaving home and we are clearly able to involve presenters from much further afield. There are a number of beekeeping associations that publish interesting programmes of online events and we will try to include some of these in our events lists.

At our last AGM I talked about a possible project in partnership with the Freemasons and the Yorda children's charity. Due to the pandemic this project is still on hold but earlier this year we were approached by the company that manages the Bentalls Centre in Kingston. The newly appointed manager with responsibility for their environmental policy was keen to see if bees could be part of the plan. We held a number of meetings with them and they came up with a very suitable site for a couple of hives on a balcony on the second floor over the Fife Road entrance. After several months of preparation the bees that had been bred in our apiary along with their new hives were successfully installed and are being looked after by two of our members who would not otherwise be in a position to have their own bees. We are clear that any commercial partnership would not be just a box ticking exercise for the company and the Bentall Centre are keen that the bees are part of a bigger plan. We have already spent a day on what became known as "Bees in the Boardroom", with committee members... and a display hive, talking to members of the staff team about bees and other pollinators. Mike Axford is currently working on designing graphics panels for the corridor and windows that run alongside the bee balcony that will provide information about the bees and pollinators. The centre management are already in discussions with local schools with a view to inviting small groups of children to view the bees as part of an educational programme. We also have plans, and a budget, to

plant up the large balcony boxes with pollinator friendly plants in time for next spring. Our continuing discussions also include looking at how we can have the occasional “pop up” event in the main shopping area of the centre.

Looking back at the notes from the meetings of the past year I can say that the committee continues to work hard to support beekeepers and bees in the Kingston area. Our monthly committee meetings include everything from insurance and budgets through to apiary maintenance and training. The AGM is my opportunity on behalf of the members to formally thank the committee for all of the hard work that they put in, and not just at the meetings.

Thanks to go to.....

Avis Marshall, ably supported by David, for her management of the apiary, all of her work on our courses and for her continued involvement in the Asian Hornet group.

To Keith McMahon for his one man honey sales drive through the farmers’ markets and his home delivery service, and also the general fixing of stuff. Keith also represents bees and pollinators on the Kingston Biodiversity Group.

To Anne Jones also for her continued work as the treasurer, despite trying to resign a couple of years ago she still wrangles the numbers for us. We continue look for her replacement.

Many thanks to Julie Hogarth as secretary for making sense of our ramblings at the meetings.

Last year I mentioned that we were looking at how we communicate with members and we hope that our our emails our now less frequent but more relevant. Our thanks go to Jane Satchwell for getting her head round MailChimp and to Mike for producing the newsletters. Additional thanks to Jane for organising our various social events, it’s not easy coming up with events that members would be interested in. Jane is always open for suggestions of topics for social meetings.

Many thanks to Ann Connolly for the time that she spends dealing with subscriptions and answering membership & course enquiries.... and making our apiary allotment plot so productive.

Also thanks to John Legate and Chris Reid for their support to the committee, their common sense and practical approach to our meetings is much appreciated.

Appreciation also goes to Barry Wood for his efforts with the numerous swarm collection calls, also for his popular and engaging presentations to schools and youth groups.

Thanks to Andy Watters for his high profile media work in attempting to get domestic insurance companies to have a more sensible approach to selling honey from home.

In addition to their committee roles Mike & Keith were actively involved in organising the Surrey Honey Show which was very successful and some of the results were displayed at the AGM.

Due to the active involvement of some of our members in the project that developed the new walking & cycling path between New Malden and Raynes Park, this has been formally named the Beeline Way. Several names were suggested at the time but “Beeline Way” received 73% of the votes in the poll run by Kingston and Merton councils.

The meeting also gave us the opportunity to thank everyone who helped out during the past year, too numerous to name but for everyone who trimmed hedges, mowed the grass, baked cakes, worked at the apiary, came down on Saturday afternoons, helped with the honey extraction..... Thank you, your contributions are much appreciated.

And a personal thank you from me..... thanks for all of your support during the year, I'm grateful for your help. Be assured that as we start to return some sort of post pandemic normality Kingston Beekeepers will continue to support our members, provide opportunities to increase our knowledge and to spread the word about the importance of bees and beekeeping.

Members were reminded that we are actively looking for a replacement treasurer and any help that they can give in that search would be appreciated but also we are very aware that we need to be thinking about some secession planning. To stay relevant the committee needs the occasional new members, so we are looking for new talent. Members who are thinking about joining the team were asked to have a chat with one of the committee, equally they shouldn't be surprised if they are approached directly by one of the committee.

Martyn Milner

Apiary Manager's Report - AGM 2021

The Spring of 2021 was very different to last year with several cold snaps and certainly no Spring honey. Six people were allowed to meet together by the time a comb change was required and this was completed during one of the warmer spells.

A decision was made not to run any new beginners theory or practical courses this year, but to concentrate on finishing the training of the intermediates and beginners of 2020. This was duly done over the season as it was not too long before up to 30 people were able to meet up outside.

Considering the inclement weather, it was a surprisingly swarmy season. On one Saturday afternoon in late Spring there were at least five swarms in the apiary, in the trees, on the shrubs, on the side of hives, even on the ground. Most of them were caught but one resolutely refused to be hived and eventually flew off. Lucky that it was a Saturday afternoon and that we were there to prevent the loss of most of these bees.

We had a policy of not running the hives on double brood boxes this season but splitting them and breeding new queens. The season has finished with 14 hives in the apiary after having to merge a couple of weak colonies and sourcing the Bentall Centre with bees. Over the season frames of eggs were supplied to members with disappearing queen problems. This proved an excellent way of generating new colonies and one that will be expanded next year.

Two very successful Can I Keep Bees days were held with people then booking onto the 2022 beginners theory and practical courses, which are now full. The interest generated in beekeeping during the lockdown has probably reached its peak and we hope to be in a position to meet demand.

It was an average year for the honey harvest and 16 of us had an enjoyable extraction day at Claygate Village Hall. There were no brood frames to extract, an unexpected bonus from running the hives on single broods, and the viscosity of the honey was low and it flowed freely. We were finished in record time and all the equipment packed away at the apiary.

New supers were purchased from National Bee Supplies, which were very easy to assemble, and are of good quality. New replacement crown boards and queen excluders were also required and we passed the winter lockdown sending emails to reorganise the mismatching honey buckets. The equipment is of a good standard and well organised in the two sheds.

Thank you to everyone who has attended the apiary during the year, members have given freely of their time to mow the grass, repair equipment, train beekeepers, and complete the many jobs involved in the efficient operation of a training apiary. It has been fantastic teamwork, people have worked well together, there is a good atmosphere and we we have all had fun.

Avis Marshall