

Epsom Division of Surrey Beekeepers
Chairperson's Report
24th November 2020



A rather difficult and unusual beekeeping year has come to an end. Despite the challenges raised, the committee and a small group of volunteers have kept the club going. In addition, a large number of you have attended the online education sessions and even more have purchased from the shop following all the rules. I am very grateful to all of you for what you have done and how you have supported us.

You can see the reports from the various sections of the club below but I would just like to emphasise some of the highlights.

The team looking after the apiary (Mike Hanly, Chris O'Brien, Jane Bush, Jane Powney and Liz Knee - joined by Ellie Lodge when Chris moved) have done an amazing job in looking after our colonies and harvesting 400lbs of honey. Other members of the committee joined in to extract, jar and label the honey ready for sale. There have not been any events for us to sell the club or members honey but, once we could, the shop opened up to members of the public and has been doing a roaring trade.

A separate team (Phil Shepherd, Fiona Dowle and Derek Dowle) looked after the Queen rearing colonies and were successful in raising 17 nucs for sale.

Our education programme for the membership came to a sudden halt in March and the Theory course was completed on Zoom. From the beginning of lockdown, Liz Knee produced a blog of the happenings in the Apiary and some more general educational information. The blog provided a communication link with our members until we started up online sessions in September. These have been very successful and I would like to thank Liz for all her work in producing the blog and adapting to the Zoom sessions. I would also like to thank Helen for running one of the Zoom sessions. On average, 25 people have attended each Zoom session and they have been recorded and uploaded to YouTube. The links have been sent out with the subsequent newsletter.

During all the different levels of lockdown, the shop team, led by Helen Worwood, has kept the shop open. The team developed a process for allowing people to order equipment and honey by email and then turn up at a pre-arranged time to pick up their order. Little did we know when we implemented the card reader, how useful it would be to maintain social distancing! The team (Helen Worwood, Jenny Breese, Ellie Lodge, Linda Hughes, Kate Kellett, Sofia Welsby and Diane Middlecoat) formed bubbles and opened up twice a week in the summer and are now opening twice a month during the winter. As we haven't attended any events, Helen has advertised on the What's On in Epsom online marketplace and this has increased the honey sales. We have also taken the decision to extend the discount that Epsom members enjoy to all Surrey members. This will be reviewed in 6 months to see how it is going.

Despite coronavirus, the grass and weeds continued to grow and I would like to thank Linda Hughes for keeping the grounds tidy and doing more planting. Hopefully, we will see the fruits of her efforts in the spring.

In addition to the above, I would like to thank the remaining committee members for carrying on with their roles during these unprecedented times. Kate Kellett, as well as being part of the shop team, has continued to manage our finances and produce the attached accounts. Kim Broughton has kept on top of the membership including the introduction of a new online system. She has also kept our Instagram presence going. Fiona Dowle and Ellie Lodge have managed the joint role of secretary between them as well as the other activities described above. Diane Middlecoat as trustee has represented Epsom at Surrey meetings and organized the shop team schedule. Sofia Welsby has been part of the shop team and, along with Kate Kellett, did a long shift extracting the club honey when it was more than 30°C!

I would also like to thank the committee members who have decided to stand down

- Helen Worwood has been a committee member for longer than I can remember. As well as being secretary for several years, she has been part of the education team, organized events and managed the shop. Luckily, Helen will continue to manage the shop, be part of the education programme and participate in events as well as post to our Facebook Group.
- Graham Hunt has been on the committee for 4 years and in that time has taken over running the website. The website has become more important during the pandemic as it is our only connection with the public. As well as keeping the website up to date, Graham has devised and managed the process for hiring out extractors which was vital for extraction for all our members.
- Geoff Dowse joined the committee 3 years ago. He worked closely with Derek Dowle to implement the repairs to the roof a couple of years ago, made signposts for the open days, drummed up business at events and organized refreshments for club meetings. He has also been a steward for SBKA.

Below are the reports from the different areas of the club.

I would like to finish by saying thank you again. The club could not survive, even in normal times, without all your support.

Gill Futcher

The Teaching Apiary - Liz Knee

The nine colonies from 2019 overwintered well, and we had no losses. The colonies had been treated in August and December to control the number of varroa and fed with fondant as required.

We convened a 'Covid Pandemic Team' of 5 beekeepers - Mike Hanly, Chris O'Brien, Jane Bush, Jane Powney and me - joined by Ellie Lodge when Chris moved - to manage the colonies throughout the season.

The spring was mild, and we began inspections on Sunday April 5th and continued weekly until late September. We lost three swarms during the complete lockdown but as restrictions eased, we began attending twice weekly which ensured we could split colonies before queen cells were capped and numbers expanded to twelve.

We united two colonies late in the season and are taking 11 strong hives into winter. These are now being supplied with fondant as required and after receiving an August treatment of Apivar to reduce varroa numbers the colonies will be sublimated with Api Bioxall in December.

We harvested nearly 400lbs of honey from the colonies and I would like to say a huge thank you to all those involved in the extraction and jarring process - quite an undertaking given the Covid restrictions and very hot weather! Also, to Helen and Kate for keeping an eagle eye on honey sales ensuring we have an accurate account of how much honey was harvested.

Although the pandemic is something we would never have wished to experience (and hopefully never ever will again), it has given us the opportunity to review our teaching methods and we have made some positive changes for next year which we are confident will improve the approach for 2021.

Finally, I would like to say a very, very big heartfelt thank you to the 'Covid Pandemic Team' for their commitment, hard work and company during this time. I think we all felt that our regular meetings gave a welcome respite and 'normality' during an extremely strange and challenging time.

Education - Liz Knee

We started January 2020 with a Theory class of 20 new Beginner Beekeepers in the classroom and finished the last session on March 19th virtually via zoom!

Sadly, due to the Covid 19 lockdown and continued restrictions we had to cancel the practical course. We regularly updated the Beginners and members through a weekly blog detailing the inspections and subsequent manipulations that the 'Covid Pandemic Team' carried out.

In September we started monthly zoom meetings for the membership which have been recorded and uploaded to YouTube. These will continue until next April when we hope that we may be able to meet in person again!

Buildings and Grounds - Liz Knee

Our thanks go to Linda for her continued grass cutting, gardening, and cleaning duties during the season. The kitchen overhaul was postponed but we are hoping now to resurrect plans and begin the process of obtaining quotes and advice to complete this during the winter season.

Apiary Shop - Helen Worwood

Phew! What a year it has been!!! No sooner had we started than we had to stop, and for a while it looked like we might never open again. It hardly seems possible that 8 months ago the shop team gathered on a zoom call and brainstormed how we could open the shop and stay within the Government's Covid safe guidelines. Risk assessment done and partnered into bubbles of two, we set about opening and our click and collect service got going. Huge thanks to Jenny Breese, Kate Kellet, Sophia Wellsby, Ellie Lodge, Linda Hughes and Diane Middlecoat.

I really didn't think in April that I would be able to report such good sales figures to this year's AGM meeting. At the end of September, we had taken an amazing £18,383, which is only £1,701 (-8%) less than the previous year but remains +£6,627 (+56%) to 2018 sales. As the graph below shows - if only the weather had held in July we might have done even better.



The sales of honey continue to provide a valuable source of income for the association and provide a service to the public. We sold £1,029 worth of apiary honey and £1,308 worth of members honey through the shop. This is in line with last year and wouldn't be possible without the support of members letting us sell some of their crop, I hope this continues as a win: win for both the association, our members and the honey buying public.

We want to continue to grow as a valuable resource for this association, providing competitively priced equipment and the advantage of picking up items at short notice as well as offering advice and assistance. We will always go the extra mile to ensure members get what they - or rather what their bees need - I hope you agree we've achieved this aim in 2020.

Thinking now of 2021, we need to consider that it may not be possible for the association to raise income through beekeeping courses for some time to come. We need to ensure we maintain a growing income stream from shop sales to contribute to our plans to improve the club facilities. With this in mind, I believe the next logical step to increase the number of customers we serve is to extend our "Epsom discount" to all members of Surrey BKA, throughout the whole year. By doing this our prices come close to internet prices and may

tempt more SBKA members to visit us more regularly. I hope members will agree this proposal.

The Queen Rearing Project - Phil Shepherd

This year the queen rearing project (QRP) has been in existence for 10 years. During this decade it has produced and supplied EBKA members with over 200 nuc colonies. The Covid-19 pandemic began just as the spring build-up of our queen rearing stocks had started, so we had little choice but to continue our annual queen rearing programme. The task was greatly helped by Fiona and Derek Dowle taking on the weekly inspection and maintenance of the 6 stock hives. Their bravery at calmly checking every frame for brood, stores, health and queen cells in 5 very large double brood hives and one covering 3 full brood boxes was much appreciated as well as their generation of 7 nucs. In all, the season produced 17 nucs for sale and several more for this coming winter. The cancelation of the practical teaching course this year meant fewer requests for bees than usual. Given the current situation is very likely to carry over into 2021, it may be prudent to reduce the amount of nuc production this coming spring. This winter we are over wintering 6 colonies and 5 nucs.

Membership - Kim Broughton

We have had a steady stream of new members joining over the year. The current membership stands at:

Registered: 92

Partner: 15

Country: 9

Junior: 1

Friend: 6

Honorary: 1

Total: 124

We also say goodbye to a few leavers who have decided to hang their bee suits up and enjoy watching the bees rather than managing them, we wish them well.

Subscription prices mostly remained the same as last year, only a slight increase to the Junior price, since it had not be re-assessed for many years.

Instagram - Kim Broughton

Our Instagram page has grown significantly - we now have 120 followers. From what we can see of their profiles most are beekeepers, but not necessarily in the Epsom area. I have tried to find and follow some of our members, who show on Instagram their beekeeping adventures, but some profiles have obscure names, so if you do have an Instagram page which you are happy to share, please let me know.

It is a dynamic way of showing interested people that we are an active association. We have been able to share posts from the BBKA about various topics including information about the Asian Hornet. It is a public page, so anyone can check it out.

Newsletter and Website - Gill Fitcher and Graham Hunt

The newsletter is sent monthly as an email message around the first day of the month. It includes items of general interest, a calendar of upcoming events and details about the shop.

The website has been updated to take account of covid restrictions and the new processes for buying from the shop and hiring an extractor have been implemented.

The website also contains a pass word protected members area where further details of committee minutes, newsletters, diary of events, members details etc are found.

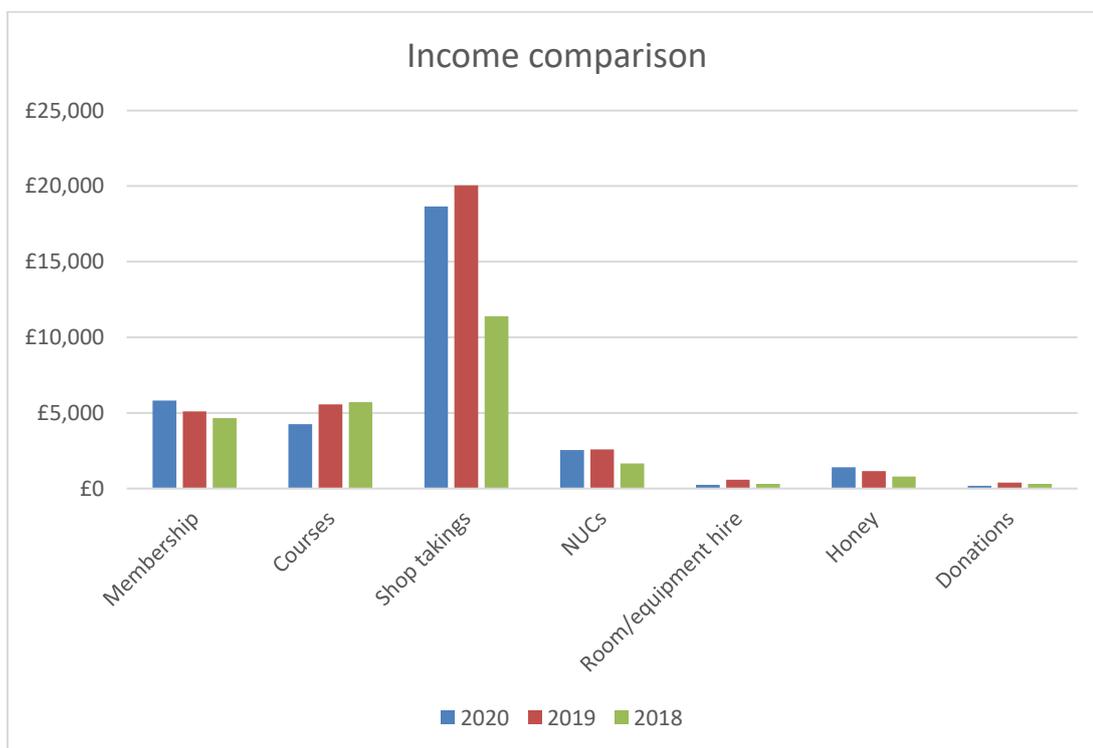
Financial Reports and Approval of Accounts - Kate Kellett

Cash Position

The financial year finished with a total cash balance of £29,568 (£3,229 of which is ring-fenced.)

Profit and Loss Account

Income received during the year has been generated through membership fees; courses; the shop; the Queen Rearing Programme; room/equipment hire; sale of Apiary honey and donations.

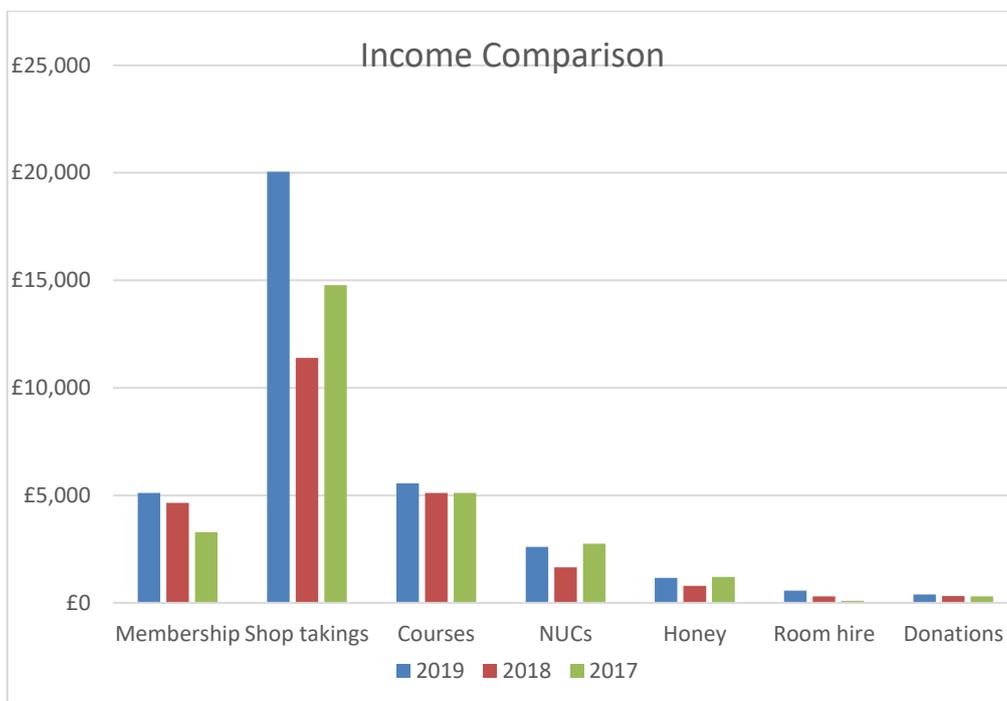


A rather pleasant surprise was the receipt of £1,934 in gift aid for the membership year ending 30th September 2018. Claims for subsequent years are in the process of being made.

Annual costs incurred in running the Club (including tutor fees) the Apiary and the Queen Rearing Programme, amounted to £8,704. Included in these costs was a small financial outlay to purchase a microscope and bee suits. There has been no major expenditure on the building during the year.

Overall, for the year ended 30th September 2020, we made a profit of £1,425 (previous year was £3,711.)

A copy of the accounts is attached separately.



I would like to thank Kate Kellett for her managing of the club finances and for preparing the audited accounts. I would also like to thank Donna Williams for auditing the accounts again this year.

The Committee

The committee usually meet 4 times a year to discuss and action everything required to run the EBKA, provide a pleasing environment and an interesting range of events to educate, inspire and retain its members as well as raising awareness of beekeeping within the local community. It is only through individuals continuing to donate time and effort that we can do this successfully.

We are extremely lucky to have an active committee and membership who are always willing to help, and I would like to encourage you all, particularly new members to join in and help to maintain this active association.