

WEYBRIDGE DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2021 SBKA AGM

Financial The Weybridge division remains in a healthy financial situation. Donations of £1216 were received from the Coop Community Fund (Shepperton branch) and £333 from the Waitrose Community Matters Fund (Weybridge store). Donations were also received from people when swarms were removed from their gardens – see below.

Membership At the end of the 2020/21 financial year, the Weybridge division had 151 members. This is an increase of 9 on the previous year.

Committee The full committee met on 6 occasions during the year, initially on Skype or Zoom due to the covid-19 situation. More recent committee meetings have been in person.

Bee health No AFB in the Weybridge area in 2021 but a much higher than usual incidence of EFB. 18 infected hives were detected in the Weybridge area with another 3 nearby in the Guildford/Woking area. Our Nosema clinic, due to be held in April, was cancelled due to the covid-19 lockdown, as was the case in 2020.

Bee swarms The BBKA swarm website page is being used as the first point of contact. This directs callers to one of several local swarm collectors. A recruitment drive in 2020 added more names to the Weybridge swarm collector list (now 16 persons). Household holders with swarms are being invited to make a no-obligation donation to the Weybridge division. In 2021 this raised £325, plus gift aid still to be received. Swarms are passed on to new members and those who have had winter losses. Members being given swarms are asked to make a donation that goes to the division, along with covering the expenses of swarm collectors.

Apiaries The Weybridge division has its longstanding apiary site for members at Row Town. Rob Chisholm has stood down as Apiary Manager, a post he has held for many years. The new Apiary Manager is Claire Balla. Paul Bunclark has generously allowed his own apiary near Row Town to be used as the division's teaching apiary. Covid-19 restrictions meant that practical classes for new beekeepers on the 2021 course could not start until 22 May, about a month later than usual. Two taster sessions were held at the apiary in August.

New Teaching Apiary and Education Centre/Clubhouse Project Following the disappointment of not being able to proceed with the Hersham property that had looked so promising in 2018, Weybridge division has continued to look at other possibilities. Some have not been viable, but there are currently other potential opportunities that are being explored.

Honey Yields 2021 honey yields seem to have been below average with a poor spring flow.

Honey Shows The Surrey County Show was not held in May 2021 – another covid casualty. A Surrey Honey Show, hosted by the Reigate division, was held on 11th September. Weybridge members did well at this show and with 82 points were a close second to Reigate division, which gained 87 points. The National Honey Show in October was able to be held this year, with Weybridge members being among the winners in the Open and Surrey classes.

Asian Hornet Action Team

Information on Asian hornet was given out at a street market event in Weybridge in June. Talks given to garden clubs, wildlife groups etc have also provided opportunities to promote Asian hornet awareness. No sightings of Asian hornet were made in the Weybridge division area but a number of reports of European hornet and other insects were made to the Weybridge AHAT team. The Weybridge AHAT leader attended the BBKA Asian Hornet webinar held on 6th March.

Education Twenty three people attended the Weybridge winter theory course for new beekeepers. The theory course was delivered on Zoom. While not quite as satisfactory as giving the lectures in person, with Zoom it is possible to record the lectures. These recordings were put on a restricted access Youtube page. This enabled students who had missed lectures to catch up. The start of the practical sessions had to be delayed until covid restrictions were lifted in May. The principal lecturer for the theory course for new beekeepers is Andrew Halstead.

Web Site The Weybridge division's website continues to be updated; the address is www.weybridgebeekeepers.org Work on developing a password-protected members' area is in progress. Currently the website is targeted mainly at non-members, with information on swarms and honey sales; this is reflected in the fact that 70 – 80% of users are first time visitors to the site. WBK is keen to offer its members more through its website. Previous research has shown that around 50% of people attending our training course have come to us through finding details on the website. The Surrey BKA website was the second largest referral of in-bound traffic and thus is an important traffic source.

Equipment A hive-lifting device for moving hives has been added to the Weybridge division's equipment.

Events

11 February: On Zoom, Matthew Ingram described his beekeeping experiences in Australia and in his own bee farm in Tamworth, Staffs.

10 March: On Zoom, Roger Patterson spoke on Queen bee problems

15 March: On Zoom, David Rudland (East Surrey Bees), gave a talk on bee diseases and pests (part of the theory course for new beekeepers, open to all members)

22 April: On Zoom, members' short talks evening. Jane Hunter talked about a visit to Trinidad and Tobago, where she encountered stingless bees. David Parker described running a two-queen hive. Vanessa Ingram and Alan Wells recounted the ups and downs of being new beekeepers. Geoff Cooper described a simple method of queen rearing that involves crowding the bees onto just a few brood frames in order to induce queen cell production.

19 June: Apiary meeting - preparing for the flow with Geoff and Marion Cooper

26 June: Weybridge street market honey stall and Asian hornet display

31 July: Apiary meeting - an Inspector Calls – a bee health meeting with Stewart Westsmith and Michael Main

3 and 7 August: Taster sessions for new beekeepers

21 August: BBQ social event

18 September: Apiary meeting - a preparing bees for winter meeting with David Parker

8 November: Weybridge division AGM – held on Zoom and in person

Andrew Halstead, Chairman, Weybridge Division of Surrey Beekeepers Association

Chairman Weybridge Division 2021