

Farnham Division Chairman's Report 2018

Last year, in my first report as Chair of FBKA, I said that we'd had an extremely busy and successful year and I went on to thank the fantastic group of volunteers that make everything happen.

I could very easily put today's date on last year's report and reissue it as we have had another extremely busy and successful year and I am again hugely grateful to the committee members and our other volunteers for all their hard work in organising and delivering the FBKA activities.

This year we have continued with our visits to schools, we have run successful courses, seen lots of members and beginners at our regular apiary sessions, we have had more examination success, we have supported lots of events, fetes and Rural Life Centre activities, we have supplied a range of member services such as fondant, foundation, varroacides, extractor hire and ran a disease clinic, we have kept the apiary in good shape and held our apiary's 10th anniversary party. The only thing we didn't do more of this year was swarms. It has been a strange year and only 11 swarms were brought in compared to 31 last year. So overall it has been a busy season and more details of these activities will be given a little later by those leading them.

I will however just say again, as I did last year, that all this doesn't happen by itself. It takes a lot of time and effort, much of it done by a small core group. This year we have had some more people getting involved in FBKA activities and to build on this we have some plans to restructure things in a way that we hope will spread the workload more evenly and build in some succession planning. These plans are still embryonic and we will announce more about them as they develop but in anticipation of that I would like to ask everyone to think about how you might wish to get more involved and help the association to deliver not only what we are currently doing but also bring in new ideas and deliver even more to our members and to the community.

The apiary remains a focal point for FBKA activities that is open to all members. We continue to hold our regular Saturday meetings and Wednesday evening sessions. In 2019, we plan to offer another varied programme of activity sessions to help us improve our knowledge and skills as beekeepers and of course, as ever, members are always welcome to simply come along to the apiary to meet and have a chat with fellow beekeepers over a cup of tea.

Apart from trying to get more people involved, the other big issue we face is the Asian Hornet. The threat is now on our doorstep with confirmed sightings in New Alresford and Guildford. We established an Asian Hornet Action Team in August and this team, led by Di Cook, has, as we heard earlier this afternoon, been busy working on plans to raise awareness, arrange widespread monitoring of apiaries by beekeepers and put plans in place to assist the authorities in the event of any sightings in our area.

A few more things to mention:

Finance. Daphne will be giving us her Treasurer's Report next so I'll leave her to give you the details but I can report that although we spent more than we earned last year our finances remain healthy with a year-end cash balance of £10,500.

Membership. In all categories, our 2018 membership was up on 2017 and totalled 188 compared with 173. The final numbers for 2018/19 renewal are not yet in but it looks as if the total is going to be broadly the same as last year.

Honey Yield. Reported harvests this year have been varied with some members getting fantastic yields while others have reported their worst ever. As for the FBKA apiary, I'm please to say that it has been a record year with over 250 lbs ready to be put into jars. This should keep the Rural Life Centre shop stocked for the coming year.

Honey Shows. I do not yet know the results of our own show; the prizes for this will be presented at the end of today's meeting, but I can report that Farnham once again came away with the Vincent Challenge Cup at the Surrey Show, which is the award for the Surrey Division that wins the most points.

Winter Talks. We had a good series of winter talks last year and our 2018/19 programme got off to an excellent start in October with a talk on plants to improve bee forage and the talk at today's AGM about beekeeping alongside the Asian Hornet. Attendances have been good but there is always room for more so please do support them.

Rural Life Centre. We continue to maintain a good relationship with the Rural Life Centre. We have a permanent Beekeeping display in one of the RLC buildings and we also support a number of their events including Rustic Sunday, Donkey Day, the Classic Car day and their Activity Thursdays, which are held during the school holidays. On these days we have a Beekeeping stand at the event, including, weather permitting, an observation hive.

So in summary another active season with a lot of highlights so I'll end with a final big thank you to everyone who has helped us get through it and look forward to continued support as we prepare for 2019.

Geoff Redwood

3rd November 2018