

## Epsom Division of Surrey Beekeepers

### Chairperson's Report

20th November 2018

I have found my first year as chairperson really enjoyable and would like to thank all the helpers and volunteers and all the members for your support and giving so much of your time .

I would particularly like to thank the rest of the committee for their input and guidance and pointing me in the right direction when needed.

Over the last year we have made improvements to the premises by completing the work done on the floor by putting down carpet tiles, the leaking roof has been fixed and the problematic mound area has been grassed over, hugely improving the appearance of the whole apiary.

All of these have been made possible by the efforts of our members. In particular, I would like to thank the working parties that spent two horrible weekends digging up the mound and turfing it - the easy part!

The money to pay for this work has been raised from courses, shop trading, Queen Rearing Project, honey sales, membership and the generosity of members.

This year we were offered the opportunity to have a "Bee weekend" at Chessington Garden Centre where Liz and Helen gave some talks and we ran a stall offering honey tasting and sales, and candle making. This was very successful for a first time event and we will look to do more events like this if offered the opportunity. It also gave us the opportunity to try out the new card payment machine which worked really well and was surprisingly easy to use. Well done to everyone!

I would also like to thank a couple of people who are stepping down from their roles. Kimberley Gimenes has been a long standing volunteer in the shop and other club events and is looking forward to spending more time on other activities. Peter Smith has been a longstanding committee member and is leaving this role. Fortunately, he has agreed to stay on as Apiary Manager.

Sadly, we said goodbye to Marysia and Adam Owsianka as they are locating to Wales. Marysia kindly donated her candle making kit and various other items and it was lovely to be able to thank her and say goodbye in style, enjoying tea and cakes and memories of her amazing help and support and sharing of her knowledge during her many years with us.

In 2018, we will have new challenges to face In particular; we are facing the threat of Asian Hornets arriving in numbers in the UK. We will be working with the Surrey Beekeeping Association to help in whatever way we can.

Moving forward into 2018 we will continue to run and improve the infrastructure of the Apiary and ensure the future of the association.

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

Gill Fletcher

### Upper Mill Apiary - Pete Smith

This year, within the apiary, it has once again proven to be anything but normal.

The cold and wet spring left the colonies coming out of winter low in numbers and, while most colonies survived the winter, they were slow to grow in numbers and we lost a couple of hives quite late in the spring.

#### Beginners Course

Sufficient colonies were available for the beginners' course. It had been hoped that we would be able to split some colonies to increase stocks but whilst some colonies seemed to be determined to produce new queens they often did not result in new colonies. We started with ten and ended with nine.

#### Disease

Two hives were treated for varroa to demonstrate to the beginners both Apiguard and Sublimation of Oxalic Acid. The recorded drops across all hives was very low with almost negligible numbers of varroa recorded.

Some Chalk Broad was observed in a couple of the hives but not in sufficient quantity to need any action. Likewise some Wax Moth larva were also spotted.

All hives will be treated later in the year with sublimation of oxalic acid to ensure the varroa levels are kept low.

I propose carrying out shook swarms to most of the hives during next year as there are a large number of brood frames needing replacement. This should help in maintaining the low levels of disease in the apiary.

#### Honey

The summer proved to be hot but dry and in comparison to recent years the honey yield was considerably lower at approximately 100lbs.

### Winter Preparations

All colonies have needed feeding with significant quantities of sugar syrup to ensure they have a stores available to them for use during the winter months. This feeding started in August and was completed by early October when the colonies had stopped taking the syrup. A full inspection was carried out to ensure that they were all queen right and with plenty of stores. There will need to be checks carried out over the coming months to ensure that these stores are sufficient to see them through the winter. I expect that most will require fondant feeding to them in the New Year.

### Swarming

The level of swarming this year appears to have been very low. At most only two of the colonies may have swarmed. One colony was introduced into the apiary from a swarm and has grown well and should overwinter.

### Grounds

One of the biggest changes carried out this year within the apiary was to remove the mound and to turf the area. This has been successfully completed and discussion can now be undertaken as to how this area can and should be used.

Additional work could be undertaken to sort out the areas around the edges of the apiary which were once flower beds to tidy them up and reduce the weeds and nettles.

### Summary

The number of colonies entering winter is not as high as I would have liked but they are all well stocked with bees and stores and as such I would hope they should survive through to the spring.

Closer monitoring of mentors, during the practical sessions, and with additional training being mandated and an expectation that they should all have or be taking the Basic Assessment during 2019 will help to improve the level of beekeeping and mentoring to beginners.

### Education - Liz Knee

Continuing education is paramount to ensuring beekeepers develop both practically and theoretically with their skill and our programme provides a summer schedule of weekly 'Tuesday Topics' and a reduced winter meeting of once a month. How to tackle Varroa and the imminent arrival of the Asian

Hornet continue to feature regularly as well swarm control and queen rearing. Members are encouraged to email suggestions for interesting topics! Meetings attract a high number of members and we were very pleased to welcome many of the 'Beginner Beekeepers' this year. Our thanks go to everyone who has contributed to the programme.

In late June we met for a field trip on Warren Farm and were guided by Frances Halstead to identify wild flowers in the Woodlands Trust meadow. The summer social proved highly popular and we enjoyed a lively evening of wine, beer and delicious food - a good opportunity to meet husbands, wives and partners of members.

All our courses were fully booked again - Theory, Practical and two Taster Days! I would like to extend a huge thank you to the many tutors who attend regularly to provide the support which enable us to continue to with these.

We have provided several external talks to various public groups which allows us to disseminate information to a wider audience and sell honey. We held our own 'Apiary Open Day' in July.

Two members took and passed their practical certificate in Basic Beekeeping and after a visit by the BBKA exams secretary, Celia Perry, our enthusiasm was re kindled and we will be running a study group to work towards taking the written exam, Module 1 next year.

We are very fortunate to have both the facility and support of members to continue to run an active association and once again a huge thank you to all for making this possible.

### **FACEBOOK - Helen Worwood**

Our Facebook page has grown significantly - we now have 400 friends. From what we can see of their profiles most are non-beekeepers in the Epsom area. We get messages asking to buy local honey and sign up to courses and get up to 700 'likes' from shared posts.

It is a dynamic way of showing interested people that we are an active association - we welcome any members who are Facebook users to like our page and posts and re share on your own timeline whenever you can.

We have also created "private group" of Members of Epsom Beekeepers Association where members can seek advice on beekeeping queries, post swarm stories, and share" what I found in my hives" photos and we encourage members to sign up to this group. Some of the most "liked" posts on this page are about Asian Hornets. It is proving to be a quick and easy way to disseminate information and may well be something we need to use more frequently in future.

### **Buildings and Maintenance**

2018 was not as dramatic as last year but had its moments! New floor tiles were sourced and fitted by Graham Hunt and the floor is now both stable and helping to keep the room warm. We then suffered a leak in the roof above the classroom. Geoff Dowse procured tenders for the work from two local builders and, with the expert advice of Derek Dows, organized the completion of the work to replace part of the roof. Hopefully this will see through a few more years.

During the summer a working party led by Peter Smith dug up the mound. This resembled the work of a prison chain gang as we moved large pieces of rubble with only one wheelbarrow! Geoff Dowse organized a digger to help start the process, and a discount on topsoil and turf to help us finish it.

Our regular cleaner and gardener continue to up keep the building and grounds and our thanks go to Linda and Lisa. We now have a blue waste wheelie bin provided by the Council which makes disposing of recyclable rubbish much easier, but I would like to remind members that we must all take responsibility for removing food waste/non-recyclable rubbish and leave the kitchen/classroom clean after use.

### **Apiary Trading - Steve Secker**

Our thanks again go to Steve Secker, Kimberley Gimenes, Helen Worwood, Jenny Breese and Linda Hughes for their commitment and time running the shop. We held the 'Spring Promotion' in March which was not as popular as usual but this was probably due to the adverse weather conditions. Overall, sales from the shop were down and again this is thought to be due to the reduction in colonies due to the late cold snap and the very hot summer

The stock order for next season has been purchased from Thorne and was collected from the Honey Show. Shop sales provide beekeepers with competitively priced equipment, members discount, and the advantage of picking up items at short notice as well as supporting the association. Advice and assistance is always on hand from the shop team and they will go the extra mile to ensure members get what they - or rather the bees - need!

The sales of honey continue to provide a valuable source of income for the association and we sell jars through the shop, at events and locally through a cafe.

### **The Queen Rearing Project - Phil Shepherd**

We are greatly indebted to The Queen Rearing Project which has gone from strength to strength under the guidance of Phil Shepherd and David Jones. The QRP was heavily influenced this year due to the repair work on the Apiary classroom floor last autumn. The hive and nuc numbers had to be reduced for

the winter as the entire stock was moved to an alternative apiary. We owe Shirley and Kevin Clark a very big thank you for allowing us to use their garden and for assisting with the move and looking after the hives during their stay. The stock was returned to the EBKA site in early 2018. Unfortunately 3 hives were lost to vandals at the club in early spring. No nucs were passed onto members as they were later used to enlarge our stocks for summer queen rearing. The latter was successful with the help of swarms supplied by Peter Smith. Additional help was greatly appreciated in the form of Sam Nicol who applied himself skilfully to the art of grafting and making mini-nucs as though he had done it for years! Welcome to the project Sam.

It is anticipated to continue the project in 2019 but the price of nucs will need to be adjusted to £150 to take into account increased costs since 2011.

### **Membership - Kim Broughton**

We have had a steady stream of new members joining.

Registered:	82
Partner:	14
Country:	4
Junior:	0
Friend:	8
Honorary:	1
Total:	109

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. I would like to thank all those not renewing for their support and to wish them well with new ventures.

After several years of no increase in membership prices, we did have to make a small change in order to cover increasing costs.

### **Newsletter and Website**

Being able to promote the activities of the EBKA to the public and other beekeepers of local divisions is an important part of its success. We are very lucky to have members who are willing to assist with this. The newsletter is currently circulated to all members and all those who are signed up on courses and to each of the Surrey Divisional Newsletter Editors. The newsletter is sent monthly as an email message on 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 received an overhaul and contains a pass word protected members area where further details of committee minutes, newsletters, diary of events, members details etc are found.

## Finances - Kate Kellett

The financial year finished with a total cash balance of £19,040 (£3,200 of which is ring-fenced.)

During the year, income was generated through:

Courses - £3,900

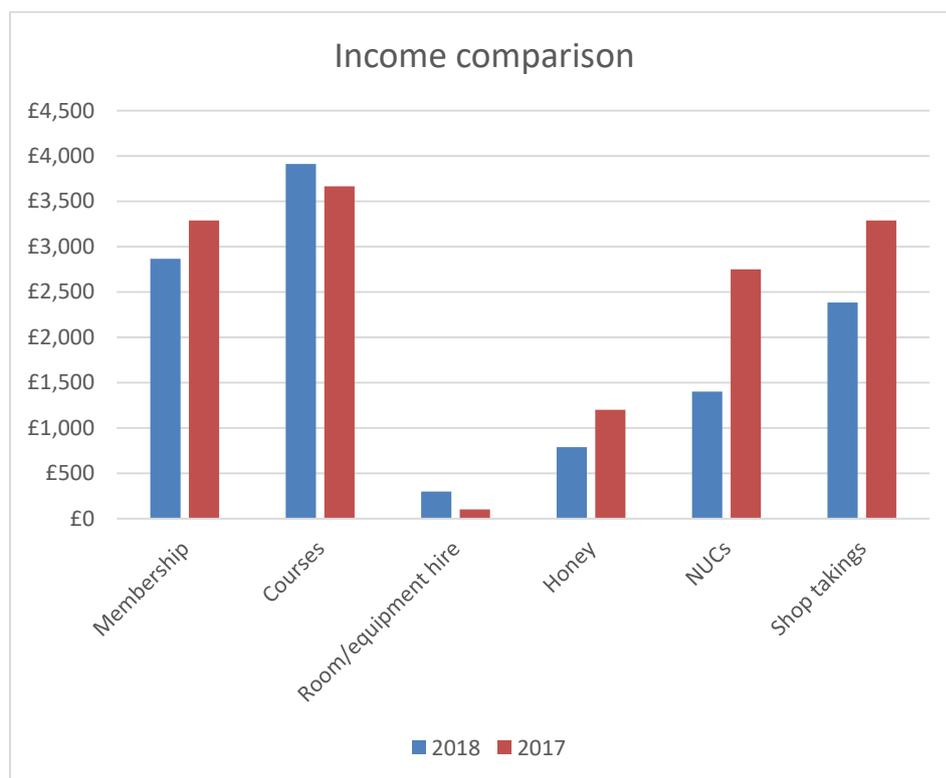
Queen Rearing Project - £1,400

Shop - £2,380

Honey - £800

In October 2017, the Apiary floor was repaired at a total cost of £14,300 and the Apiary roof was repaired in the summer at a total cost of £1,050.

Since the 1st October 2018, we have paid out £1,860 for stock for the shop. With membership and course income since that date of £2,155, the bank balance is currently c£19,400. Annual costs incurred in running the Club amount to approximately £6,180. The final statement is attached.



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

### **The Committee**

The committee 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 and it is only through individuals continuing to donate time and effort that we can do this successfully. I would like to thank Helen Worwood, our club secretary, for her excellent organization of the committee and for making sure we follow up on our actions.

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.