

## Epsom Division of Surrey Beekeepers

### Chairman's Report

21<sup>st</sup> November 2017

I would like to start my last report by saying a very big thank you to every member of the EBKA for your support during the year, to extend a warm welcome to all those new to the association and to say goodbye to those leaving.

I have thoroughly enjoyed my term as Chair but feel it is time to step back and support a new member to lead the association and bring fresh ideas and perspective.

The committee works hard to ensure that the association provides a stimulating environment for members. We are extremely lucky to have our own buildings and grounds, but this results in additional work to keep these in good condition and to generate enough revenue to maintain them. Through money raised from courses, shop trading, Queen Rearing Project, honey sales, membership and the generosity of members we have been able to provide new foundations to support the leaning classroom and a level, solid floor. Well done to everyone! Moving forward into 2018 we will be concentrating on raising more money to continue to run and improve the infrastructure and ensure the future of the association.

#### Upper Mill Apiary

The colonies in the teaching apiary all over wintered well with minimal feeding and intervention. The bees were treated against varroa using sublimation of Api-Bioxal in January 2017 and levels remained low during the season. A new group of 20 'Beginners' led by a team of regular tutors looked after the colonies and numbers of hives increased through artificial swarming techniques. Levels of swarming were generally lower and the very dry spring and early summer followed by a cool, wet late July and August meant that the honey was slow to accumulate. The final crop was similar to last year at approximately 260lbs. This has been jarred and labelled and is selling well.

Our 'unique selling point' is providing a practical course that allows candidates to experience a whole season of beekeeping on their 'own' colonies. To do this successfully we rely on many dedicated members who give up their Saturday mornings to act as tutors for the Beginner Group. Huge thanks go to the Apiary Manger Pete Smith and the team of regular tutors: Mike Hanly, Paul Gray, Roz Lewis, Alan Berridge, Graham Hunt, Chis O'Brien, Helen Worwood, Diane Middlecoat, Geoff Harris, Geoff Dowse, Elio Zentilin and the Beginner Group for their excellent beekeeping!

I would also like to give Mike Hanly and Chris O'Brien an additional special mention for their outstanding attention to the colonies, equipment and workshop - THANK YOU!

## Out Apiaries

The EBKA is fortunate to have the use of two out-apiaries which provide space for members colonies. These are located at Hatch Furlong and Plough Road Allotments. These continue to be productive sites.

## Education

Education, teaching, support and mentoring form an important part of the EBKA and the association has continued to provide courses, weekly meetings, attend local events, provide talks, and promote via its website and Facebook page.

The Beginners 10-week Theory Course commenced in January with 22 candidates and followed on in April with the Practical Course which attracted 20 Beginners.

We held two 'Taster Days' in May which saw a total of 32 members of the public experiencing an overview of the theory of beekeeping in the classroom and practical aspects spent opening the hives.

To date, we have 8 people booked and paid onto the 2018 Theory Course, 8 interested in the Practical Course and 2 booked and paid on the Taster Day. 16 more have expressed an interest in the courses and will be followed up to confirm. The courses are advertised on the website, Facebook page and BBKA 'Find a Course'.

The Apiary Open Day was held in July. We set up the observation hive, displays and information for the public to browse. This year, again supplies of honey from different beekeepers were available for the public to taste before buying.

The weekly Tuesday club meetings have continued to attract good numbers from our own association and from neighboring divisions. Frances Halstead talked to us about the 'Important Sites and Hidden Gems of Surrey' and we had an interesting 'innovations' evening looking at a prototype plastic frame and ways to adapt your hive with observation panels! As we had a large group of members taking the Basic Assessment we decided to use the syllabus as a template for our weekly meetings which worked well for all members providing opportunities for revisiting and learning new topics. We ended the season with the traditional blind honey tasting event with two new and one returning winners! Congratulations to Paul Gray (1<sup>st</sup>), Phil Shepherd (2<sup>nd</sup>) and Steve Secker (3<sup>rd</sup>).

The 'Study Group' worked through Module 5 - this was a particularly tough syllabus and only two of the initial 12 sat the exam - but they did pass so well done to them!

Congratulations go to our 12 candidates who passed their Basic Assessment in Beekeeping held at the Upper Mill Apiary in July - 9 of them passing with credits!

I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to all those who regularly help with our educational programme - it is not easy to organise interesting topics that appeal to the various levels of beekeeper and feedback is always useful so please do let us know how we can improve and if you can help!

## EVENTS AND TALKS

We have attended several events in the local area this year including Ewell Yule (Dec 2016) Herald of Spring, Loseley Garden Show, Hook Fun Day and we will be at Ewell Yule (2017) on December 1<sup>st</sup>. The new bright yellow gazebo that we purchased earlier in the year has proved invaluable - the weather at Loseley Park was awful! These provide ideal opportunities to promote the association, beekeeping and sell apiary and members honey. We always need volunteers to help man the events so do keep helping us!

We have given talks to children at St Joseph's school in Epsom, Holmwood WI, Harry Edwards Healing Sanctuary, Cheam Gardening Group and Croydon Beekeepers.

## FACEBOOK

Our Facebook page has grown significantly - we now have 314 friends. From what we can see of their profiles most are non-beekeepers in the Epsom area (except Norman Carreck!). We get messages asking to buy local honey and sign up to courses and get up to 400 '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.

## Bee Health and Swarms

Swarm calls appeared more manageable this year although they started early on the 21<sup>st</sup> April. Pete Smith attended 23 call outs on behalf of the EBKA - these are detailed in the Members Area of the Epsom Beekeepers Facebook page so do look! He has collected from inside the bonnet of a car, from wooden and wire fences, a hanging basket, and from inside an ornamental chimney pot amongst the usual trees and shrubs - didn't he do well!

Most of the swarms were handed over to the Queen Rearing Project and I would like to say thank you to Pete for his time and effort to collect and reassure the public!

The teaching colonies remained healthy and there were no reported bee diseases amongst members. We will be monitoring with a view to doing a winter sublimation of oxalic acid should levels of varroa rise.

The colonies were fed with sugar syrup and the good weather whilst the ivy was flowering enabled a late influx of nectar and pollen!

Although the Asian Hornet has not been seen in Surrey yet, reports of European hornets hawking around colonies was increased this year. Whether this is due to better identification or a rise in hornet numbers is unclear. We did put up traps around the apiary, but these collected a large number of native insects including our European hornet - so we took them down! Members are reminded to stay vigilant for the Asian Hornet.

### Buildings and Maintenance

2017 began with a flood inside the classroom from a burst water pipe which caused water to cascade across the floor and out of the front door and side of the building! This highlighted the sinking building and the poor state of the wooden floor and prompted investigations into options available for putting this right. The most cost effective and timely approach was to provide new foundations to the classroom and replace the whole rotting wooden floor. Providing a solid, stable base will enable us to replace walls, windows and roof as funds become available and we can now plan a programme of works to do this.

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

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 attracted a significant number of pre-orders to start the season. The shop opened earlier on a Saturday from 11.30am till 1.30pm and continued to open every Tuesday evening. 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

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 has had a steady year with 22 nucs passed onto members. The season has generally been good with plenty of flying time for queen mating. All the queens have been reared by grafting young larvae into queen cups and several of these sealed queen cells have been used to replace queens from aggressive stocks held by members and for queenless states where appropriate. This use of sealed queen cells will in future incur a small fee of £20 per cell to cover the costs of equipment used in this process. Following the closure of the LASI hygienic bee rearing program this spring due to European foul brood in some of their colonies, it was decided to be cautious about the stocks we purchased from them last year. However, 2 of the 5 queens received have been retained and used sparingly to raise queen cells. The Buckfast queens have been used throughout the year and have been replaced with 2 new queens this autumn for next season stock. Due to the repair work on the Apiary classroom floor this autumn the hive and nuc numbers have been reduced for this winter so no nucs will be available in the early spring next year.

The entire stock has had to be moved to an out apiary and we owe Shirley and Kevin Clark a very big thank you for allowing us to use their garden and for assisting with the move. Hopefully the stock will be return back to their normal apiary site later this winter.

## Membership

We have had a steady stream of new members joining - the following table shows how current numbers compare to previous years. Sadly, Tony Waylett who reorganised and ran the 'library' died earlier this year - he will be greatly missed. 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.

Subscription prices remain the same as last year.

Type of member	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13
Registered	85	82	91	100	92
Partner	16	14	11	12	14
Country	5	3	5	4	4
Junior	0	0	0	0	3

Friend	7	8	1	2	3
Honorary	2	3	4	4	3
Total	115	110	112	122	119

### 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, our current Treasurer has worked hard to run and prepare the accounts for presentation to the membership and I would like to extend our thanks to her for taking on this role. Please see the audited accounts and supporting notes for details of final numbers. I would like to thank Julie Freshwater for auditing the accounts again this year.

The works done to the classroom has depleted our funds and our focus for 2018 will be generating income to not only cover our 'running' expenses but to build up a surplus to ensure that we can continue the programme of improvements to the building as required.

### 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. 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.

Liz Knee

