

## Farnham Beekeepers Association

### Chairman's Report 2017

This is my first annual report as Chair of FBKA and what a year it has been.

We've had Beginners training courses, we had a great apiary season, had fantastic exam success, an interesting winter talks programme, we've attended lots of schools, events and shows, we've done queen rearing, run a bee disease clinic, had success at the Surrey Show, sold lots of honey, had a summer garden meeting and we've even had a supper quiz.

Of course, all of this does not just happen. It takes a lot of time and effort to plan and arrange things. Farnham Beekeepers is incredibly lucky to have such a fantastic team of volunteers to do all this and I emphasize the word volunteer. We are fortunate to have people who are willing to give up so much of their valuable time to the Association.

Looking at some of our activities in more detail I'd like to highlight the following:

#### Education

There are four main strands to our education activities. We have courses and training, school visits, event support and our teaching apiary:

- On the courses and training front we ran a fully subscribed Beginners course over the winter months which was followed by practical sessions at our teaching apiary during spring and summer. A big thank you must go to David and Rosalind Clague and their helpers for running these and also for re-structuring the regular apiary sessions to provide training for intermediate and more advanced beekeepers. Thanks must also go to Alastair Welch for the considerable help and support he has given to our education activities. Farnham members had good success with examinations this year, with four members passing the BBKA Module 1, two of whom achieved a Distinction. Also, Farnham provided the first candidates for the new BBKA Honey Bee Health Certificate examination and I am pleased to report that all six candidates passed.
- On the Schools side of things Margaret Lennard has again organised and with her team has delivered visits to local schools, where possible taking in an observation hive. These are an important part of the Association's activities. Children have a lot of interest in the environment and are concerned about it. Introducing them at an early age to the importance of our bees and other pollinators can only help in locking in that interest and spreading the word.
- In addition to the courses and school activities, we supported a variety of fetes and other events with a beekeeping stand and observation hive and gave talks to a variety of groups. Unfortunately, we had to turn down some events because of a shortage of volunteers.
- Apiary. Our teaching Apiary is at the heart of our activities and thanks must go to David Fitzpatrick, our Apiary Manager who has chaired our Apiary Committee for the last four years. He has been very hands-on in ensuring that the apiary infrastructure is maintained and that we have everything we need for our apiary activities. David has been supported by members of his Committee as well as others who have helped with various tasks to ensure that all has run smoothly, including the collection and subsequent management of swarms from within our area. This year we introduced a queen rearing programme and expanded the hive types at the apiary to help members experience the pros and cons of a range of different hives, including a Dartington, a top bar and a Beehaus. We also introduced a Wednesday evening session to give access to the apiary to those unable to get to our usual Saturday meetings.

#### Committees and helpers

Thanks to the generous support of the members of our Main and our Apiary Committees and the other volunteers who have provided help and assistance, the Association has been able to provide a great level of service and facilities to our membership, our local community and other stakeholders. However, like many clubs and associations, we rely on a fairly small number of volunteers to keep things going. Whilst those currently involved continue to be happy to carry on, there is always room for new pairs of hands to help and to bring fresh ideas, so if anyone would like to get more involved in helping to run Association activities please do not hesitate to talk to me or to any other member of the Committee.

#### Member and public services

Apart from access to the teaching apiary, the Association has again provided a range of member and public services, including equipment hire, discounted foundation, wax exchange, discounted fondant, swarm collection, disease clinic, website, monthly Newsletter and a general enquiries email address.

## **Disease**

Sadly, not all is bright and rosy on the beekeeping front. EFB continues to affect our region. There have been outbreaks in our immediate area (Godalming and Camberley) and also a major outbreak at one of the Wimbledon Division apiaries, which resulted in the majority of its colonies being destroyed. Whilst the source of the Wimbledon outbreak is thought to be nearby feral colonies it nevertheless serves as a reminder to us all of the importance of regular disease inspections and good hygiene practices. We ran a Disease Clinic this year and will run another next year and I would urge all members to try and come along in 2018 or arrange for samples to be sent in.

The other cloud on the horizon is the Asian Hornet. Last year it was found in two locations, Somerset and Gloucestershire and this year it has been found in the Channel Islands and in Devon. Whilst there has been success in finding the nests I think we have to face the fact that the Asian Hornet is going to be with us sooner or later and we all need to keep a close lookout and spread the word to the public at large.

## **Research Funding**

At last year's AGM we agreed to make a donation of £500 towards bee research, which was channelled through SBKA to the BBKA. The money has yet to be earmarked to a project but it is understood that we will soon learn exactly what project it will help support.

## **Honey Yield**

Yields in our area have varied again this year but it seems, with a few notable exceptions, that most members are reporting crops down on 2016. The apiary yield was certainly down on last year's 237lbs.

## **Honey Shows**

Our 2016 honey show attracted 78 exhibits from 25 exhibitors. Congratulations went to David Clague on winning the Dr Hunt Cup for the second year running and to John Holton for winning the Harrison Cup for best in show.

## **Surrey County Show**

At the Surrey County Honey Show this year, Farnham again did well. Our members won 25 out of a total of 59 certificates, as a result of which Farnham came away with the Vincent Challenge Cup for the Division with the most points. Our members came first in 9 of the 20 categories and Rosalind Clague won the Composite Cup. Our grateful thanks to Hazel Sharples, Daphne Thomas and Elizabeth Knight for their hard work in assisting with the show.

## **Winter Talks**

We had a successful series of 2016/17 winter talks with six speakers covering a range of topics. Attendance was good but there is always room to fit a few more people into the venue. The talks themselves are not only informative but the events provide a good opportunity to meet fellow beekeepers and have a good chat about the craft over a cup of tea and a biscuit. Our 2017/18 programme is already well underway so please do continue to give them your support, including the Supper Quiz in February 2018.

## **Rural Life Centre**

We continue to maintain a good relationship with our teaching apiary host, the Rural Life Centre. We have a permanent Beekeeping display in one of the RLC buildings and we also support many of their events including their Activity Thursdays for children, which are held throughout the school holidays. At all of these days we have a Beekeeping stand at the event, including, weather permitting, an observation hive. The RLC attracts many visitors and our close links provide the Association with a great means of promoting one of the objects of the SBKA, which is to advance the education of the public in the environmental and economic importance of bees.

Finally, as reported last year, David Dennington will be standing down at the Surrey Beekeepers AGM on 2<sup>nd</sup> December. We thanked David last year for everything he has done for Farnham and Surrey Beekeepers over many years but in closing I would just like to re-iterate those thanks.

Geoff Redwood

November 2017