

Epsom Division of Surrey Beekeepers
Chairperson's Report
23rd November 2022



I would like to say that a more normal beekeeping year has come to an end but, no beekeeping year is normal! We came out of the Covid restrictions and started face to face meetings in April. It was great to see so many members return to the education sessions. And then we went into the hottest summer on record. While we wilted, the bees thrived and most beekeepers have healthy colonies and a rewarding harvest.

You can see the reports from the various sections of the club below but I would just like to emphasize some of the highlights.

The major project this year has been the refurbishment of the kitchen and bathroom facilities. Like all building projects this entailed much more work than had originally been thought. Even though we have spent a large amount of the club funds, you can see the results and we now have a building that is fit for purpose and a lot less likely to collapse! I would like to thank Stuart Gendall and Derek Dowle for their dedication to this project. Stuart will be giving more details about this project shortly. This expenditure is not reflected in the attached accounts as the invoices were paid after September and so will be recorded in this year's accounts.

As we spent more than we had budgeted for the building works and electricity costs have tripled over the year, we will be looking at as many opportunities as possible to raise funds. One of our committee members, Zoe Kingham, is running a sponsored half-marathon in January. You can click on her Justgiving page to sponsor Zoe, keep track of her progress 'and help the club.

https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/zoe-kingham?utm_term=Px6rx8xyG

As you will see from the reports below, we have taken some actions to raise fund and if you have any good ideas, please let the committee know.

The team looking after the apiary (Mike Hanly, Ellie Lodge, Jane Bush, Jane Powney, Nick Fry, John Futcher and Liz Knee have successfully managed the club colonies through another trying year and provided expert tuition on our Beginners practical Course throughout the summer. The honey harvest was much improved this year and the club has about 350 lbs of honey to sell to raise funds.. Other members of the committee joined in to extract, jar and label the honey ready for sale.

A separate team (Phil Shepherd, Fiona Dowle and Derek Dowle) looked after the Queen rearing colonies and raised 23 nucs which were sold to our members. Sadly, Phil has decided it is time to pass on ownership of the QRP to others and Sam Nichol and John Futcher will be helping out Fiona and Derek next year. Phil's knowledge and expertise will be greatly missed.

Liz Knee, with the support of Helen Worwood, has continued to run our education programme over Zoom and, now, in person. They have continued to provide us with a varied

and extremely interesting programme and 12 beginners completed the combined theory and practical course. We have also ran a successful experience day despite the monsoon rains. Several members have successfully taken BBKA exams (see below) and Liz will continue to provide support for members who would like to take these. In addition, Liz, Diane Middlecoat and Sofia Welsby have spoken at events for external organisations and schools.

The shop team, led by Helen Worwood, have continued to keep our members supplied with equipment and the public with honey. The team (Helen Worwood, Jenny Breese, Ellie Lodge, Linda Hughes, Kate Kellett, Sofia Welsby and Diane Middlecoat) have opened the shop every Saturday and during education sessions. In addition, Helen has expanded the honey and hive products sales from the shop to the newly formed Ewell Artisan Market. This monthly event, not only gives us an opportunity to raise more funds for the club but also, gives us more opportunities to reach out to the general public and promote bees and beekeeping.

Kim Broughton has continued to look after our membership activities and our numbers are slightly up on last year.

I would also like to thank Linda Hughes, with help from Kevin Double, for keeping the grounds tidy and Freja Welsby for doing the same for the building.

In addition to the above, I would like to thank the remaining committee members for carrying on with their roles. Kate Kellett, as well as being part of the shop team, has continued to manage our finances and produce the attached accounts. Kim Broughton has kept on top of the membership and kept our Instagram presence going. Fiona Dowle and Ellie Lodge have managed the joint role of secretary between them as well as the other activities described above. In particular, Fiona has been responsible for all the communication regarding courses. Diane Middlecoat as trustee has represented Epsom at Surrey meetings and organized the shop team schedule. Diane will be stepping down from her role as trustee but will continue with her other roles. Sofia Welsby has been part of the shop team and has continued to represent Epsom Division on the Surrey Honey Show committee. Sofia will be stepping down as an Epsom committee member but will continue as our rep to the Surrey Show.

As you know, I'm stepping down as chair and have taken the opportunity to look at what I promised to do before I was elected. I am happy to say that I have achieved most of them including improving the building, acquiring a card machine for payments and having a toilet seat that fits. I am not going anywhere and will be happy to provide any support to the incoming chair.

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

I would like to finish by saying thank you again. Without our members support and enthusiasm we would not be able to survive as a club.

Gill Futcher

Education and Teaching Apiary - Liz Knee

Teaching Apiary Report

There is a team of eight members that manages the teaching apiary colonies and tutor the Beginners on the Theory/Practical Beekeeping Course. My thanks go to each for their tireless commitment, support and excellent company!

Helen Worwood (Theory tutor)

Mike Hanly

Nick Fry

John Futcher

Jane Bush

Jane Powney

Ellie Lodge

Liz Knee

The colonies were regularly attended during the winter of 2021 and into 2022, monitoring food stores and treating against varroa via oxalic acid sublimation. Equipment was cleaned and maintained in readiness for the start of the beekeeping season. There were no colony losses. In early spring, each colony had a Bailey comb change to remove old wax frames and were split using the Pagden artificial swarm control technique when required. Swarming started early but finished early due to the high summer temperatures and reduced forage. Despite the challenging heat, colonies filled the supers and we removed approximately 350lbs of honey. A rota of members and tutors extracted the harvest in one day which worked well and was less time consuming than doing it piecemeal. The honey was jarred in a mix of 1lb and half pound jars for sale.

The colonies were generally healthy with seemingly low levels of varroa but Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus continues to be a regular problem both in the apiary colonies and locally. The colonies were treated with Apivar in September despite the low monitoring drop, firstly, to demonstrate the techniques to the Beginners and, secondly, to ensure we were not missing varroa in the capped brood. One colony was treated using the new Formic Pro (formic acid) strips and we found the application straightforward with no adverse effects on the bees.

We were able to start the Beginners Practical Course in April due to the relaxation of covid restrictions but continued to stay outside as much as possible. We had 12 Beginners who regularly attended and our thanks goes to them for proving to be a dedicated and hardworking team - and good fun!

The late summer flush of ivy and other flowering plants has provided a huge influx of stores and colonies have expanded again in the warm weather - a juggle to give them space but being aware of the changing season and imminent drop in temperature and forage. Extra feeding has therefore not been necessary, but colonies will be carefully monitored going through winter and fondant applied if required. We ended the season with eleven colonies.

Education Report

We returned to face-to-face meetings in April 2022.

Responding to the members' survey, the number of meetings was reduced to the first and last Tuesday of each month offering a presented 'topic' and a more relaxed question/discussion forum.

Numbers attending have fluctuated and we hope that moving forward more members will feel inspired and confident to attend in person - we miss you! During the winter November to April, we will meet on the first Tuesday of the month only.

Providing a programme of education that appeals to everyone is not easy and it would be very helpful if members would voice their interests to ensure we continue to provide relevant training - don't be shy - this is YOUR association!

In March three members took written module exams -

Jenny Breese, Helen Worwood (Module 5) and Liz Knee (Module 1) - all successfully passed.

In June, three members took their Basic Practical Assessment - Nick Fry, Guru Roy and Siav ash Yali and Jane Bush, the Bee Health Practical Assessment.

All four members worked very hard, and I am proud to say they all passed!

Taking practical and written assessments are a really good way to continue and update your knowledge and skill to manage a colony of bees. Support is provided for members whilst on their learning journeys and it is very satisfying receiving a certificate/badge to celebrate your success!

Details of the next set of dates to apply/sit for these will be circulated in early 2023.

External groups are beginning to request talks and members have visited schools and local WI groups this season.

The monthly Ewell Village Artisan Market also provides a forum for passing on knowledge and advertising courses as well as selling honey.

Beginners Theory/Practical Course

In January 2022 we had the first cohort of twelve students to take the 'combined' theory and practical beginners' beekeeping course. This ensured that all attendees had received the same 10 weeks of theoretical knowledge before moving out into the apiary for the practical training.

We believe that the reduced number of Beginners attending the course, whilst combining both parts, has greatly improved the quality of teaching and learning. Four Beginners bought nucs and one is on the spring waiting list, whilst eight have joined the association either as a registered, partner or country member.

Understanding the financial position of the association, we have agreed to temporarily increase the number of attendees to fourteen for the 2023 season, but we will be seeking additional tutors to ensure that standards are maintained. Currently we have a list of people being contacted to confirm their places to start the Theory section in January 2023.

Experience Day

We held one Experience Day in May this year with sixteen attendees. The afternoon rain sadly stopped us from opening the colonies, but we were able to set up the observation hive and the whole day proved highly successful.

Moving forward to 2023 we have already started advertising two dates in May/June with the possibility of running a third if demand is high.

I would like to give very big thank you to all the members who help on the courses - we can only continue to deliver these with your support.

Apiary Building Repair and Refit - Stuart Gendall

In January 2022 the Committee tasked a small team to follow up on a report (Derek Dowle, Jan 2020) on the structure and condition of the Apiary Building. The team identified several areas of deterioration requiring attention including damaged gutters, water ingress to the floors at the rear of the building and large areas of rot in the rear and side of the kitchen leading to subsidence of its floor and walls.

It was decided the works would require professional attention. Several local companies were approached and Refine Building Maintenance selected.

The works began on 12 September to ensure the smallest disturbance to member activities.

The investigation phase saw the removal of kitchen units and sections of the kitchen floor and walls. It revealed the entire kitchen, lobby and toilet section had no firm foundation. Resting on loosely packed soil, reduced air flow and damp had led to extensive rot across the floor and into the external and inner partition walls.

After a review of our options and costs, the Committee asked the contractor to remove all the rotten structures, to create new foundations and a stronger floor with welded joints and coved skirtings at the building perimeters. It required a new floor covering to overlay the entire area and for new partitions to be installed.

The repairs were completed in mid-October and Refine were then asked to refit the empty shell. Ceilings were stripped and repainted, the walls were retiled and fitted with aqua-board coverings.

The kitchen refurbishment included the installation of modern cupboard units under a new bespoke servery counter. The existing stainless steel double sink was repurposed with new fittings and the windows painted and fitted with a splashback panel. The old disabled toilet units have been replaced with updated equivalents meeting current regulations including a

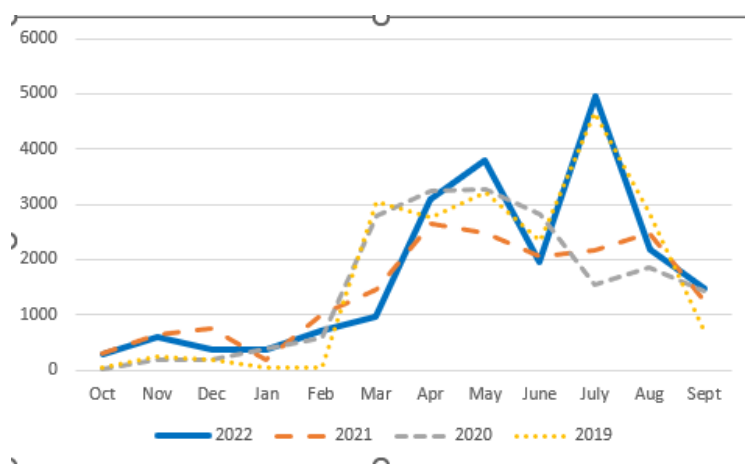
new wider toilet door. The gutters have been cleaned and repaired and damp proofing measures applied to the building's rear wall.

Whilst the project has involved greater expense than could have been anticipated at the outset, we now have a clubhouse that is fit for purpose.

Apiary Shop - Helen Worwood

Starting this report with two "Thankyous" - firstly to you, our members for sticking with the email and collect appointment system and secondly to our hard working crew of volunteers Jenny Breese, Kate Kellet, Sophia Wellsby, Ellie Lodge, Linda Hughes and Diane Middlecoat.

The solid blue line of sales performance in the graph below shows sales largely tracking previous years. At the end of September, we had taken an amazing £20,923, which is £3,506 (+20%) more than last year and +14% to 2020 - I think we can safely say we have recovered from Covid.



The sales of honey continue to provide a valuable source of income for the association and provide a service to the public. We sold £2,775 of honey during the year, this was £2,395 worth of members and only £380 worth of apiary honey. This is significantly (49%) less than the £4,673 of 2020 and very much reflects that the 2021 harvest, which we sold through 2022 and was significantly reduced by the damp and cold start of the year - thankfully the 2022 harvest has been much larger and will keep us going into 2023.

Joining the Ewell Village regeneration challenge during lockdown finally paid off with the launch of the Makers and Artisan Market in the Grove in September. We had an astonishing first event taking Over £1,000 and we took a further £890 in October and £700 in November, despite the rain. The market is taking a break in January but does look set to become a permanent feature of village life and gives us an excellent opportunity to engage the public, increasing our profile, promoting bees and beekeeping as well as securing funds for the apiary from Honey sales. Thanks to those members who have supported with both their honey (and dibbers!), and their time setting up, running and packing away the stall, - teamwork really does make the dream work.

We have continued to offer the Epsom Members discount to the whole of Surrey BKA membership in the hope of growing our income by securing more customers. We certainly

have not seen a large inflow of members from other Surrey divisions and probably need to do more to promote awareness of the shop to tempt people to visit us.

As you are aware, not just beekeeping equipment prices have increased and, though we continue to buy in bulk to achieve the best value, you will see some small price increases from Saturday 3rd Dec so that we can continue to contribute a small operating surplus to cover the essential overheads of running our Apiary building.

The Queen Rearing Project - Phil Shepherd

The Covid-19 pandemic has now seen three full seasons of beekeeping pass and interest from members wanting bees this year has been strong. The QRP has passed on 23 nucs and the stocks of bees have done very well. The year has been a good one for bees in general and especially for queen rearing and nuc production. The spring was warm, and the nectar flows steady followed by a warm to hot summer which was ideal for queen matings and nuc development. Once again, the maintenance of our stocks was extremely well managed by Fiona and Derek Dowle with their weekly inspections of the 8 stock hives and then splitting those stocks showing early signs of swarming. The year has ended with 8 stocks re-queened and 3 nucs for back up in the event of a difficult winter to come.

The coming season will be different for me as the time has come for me to hand over the management of the QRP. I would like to thank all those members who have been part of the QRP over the years since David Jones and myself set it up in 2009. Since the first nucs became available in 2010, over 188 of them have found homes with EBKA members and that is a great achievement by all those involved. Personally, I have had enormous fun and enjoyment in being part of the QRP and the happy hours spent drinking coffee with you while planning the work to be done and, of course, the excitement of opening newly made nucs to see if we had successfully raised a new queen.

Thank you and enjoy your future beekeeping.

Membership - Kim Broughton

We have had a steady stream of new members joining over the year. The current membership stands at a total of 127:

Registered: 97

Partner: 12

Country: 8

Friend: 9

Honorary: 1

We have said goodbye to a few leavers, some who have decided to hang their bee suits up and some who have moved to another part of the country, we wish them well.

Unfortunately, due to the increase in electricity costs this year, we had to increase our membership fees to help cover these. Also there was an increase in the price of Beecraft Paper edition and that was included in the increase.

Instagram – Kim Broughton

Our Instagram page has grown significantly - we now have 233 followers. Some of our followers are local and some are from around the world including Germany, America & Australia and it is interesting to see the differences in beekeeping in various parts of the world. I have tried to find and follow some of our members, who show on Instagram their beekeeping adventures, but some profiles have obscure names, so if you do have an Instagram page which you are happy to share, please let me know.

It is a dynamic way of showing interested people that we are an active association. We have been able to share posts from the BBKA about various topics including information about the Asian Hornet. It is a public page, so anyone can check it out

<https://www.instagram.com/epsombeekkeepers/>

Newsletter and Website -Nick Fry, Graham Hunt, Gill Fatcher

The website has been fairly stable since it was updated last year. Nick continues to maintain the information and is now looking at creating an online shop so that members can order on a click and collect basis. This will make it easier for members to order equipment (and know if it is in stock) and improve the efficiency of our stock control.

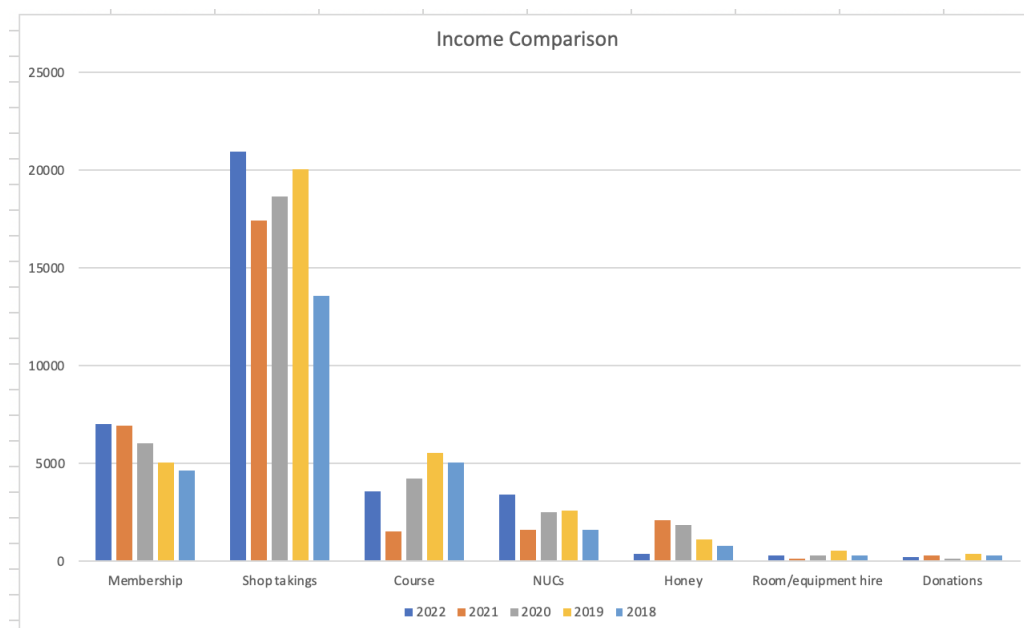
Financial Reports and Approval of Accounts – Kate Kellett

Cash Position

The financial year finished with a total cash balance of £36,021 (£5,000 of which is ring-fenced.)

Profit and Loss Account

Income received during the year has been generated through membership fees; courses; the shop; the Queen Rearing Programme; sale of Apiary honey; room/equipment hire and donations.



Annual costs incurred in running the Club (including tutor fees) the Apiary and the Queen Rearing Programme, amounted to £8,539. Expenditure on electricity this year was £1,260 (previous year £394.) Expenditure on the building amounted to £3,544 which included a £2,000 deposit for the refurbishment work.

Overall for the year ended 30th September 2022, we made a profit of £200 (previous year was £1,600.)