

Croydon Division Chair's report 2022-23

It's amazing to realise how much we have done in the last 12 months. Luckily we have our brilliant newsletter which records everything in words and pictures.



**CROYDON
BEEKEEPERS**

Training & Education

Debbie Burney, our education officer, has continued to expand our programme, some of which has been delivered jointly with our colleagues at Reigate Beekeepers. This year she organised training in First Aid that was tailored specifically to beekeepers.

Mags Scott and Kathy O'Toole ran our Beginners' theory course in the winter, followed by practical apiary sessions. We now have a "Beginners corner" in the division apiary run by Anna Slade and backed up by monthly newsletter articles.

Six members passed their Basic Certificate this year.

Intermediate subjects have included Queen Rearing led by Keith Williamson and also delivered through monthly items in our newsletter and practical sessions in the apiary. We ran a winter study group together with Reigate Beekeepers working towards module 3. Eight of our members sat the exam, and all passed, half with credit.

Our partnership with Mrs Burney's Bee Club is working well, giving us a link to young beekeepers. Overall twenty children in Croydon have achieved their Junior Bee Certificate this year.

We have a school member, and have supported them with advice and a grant for the purchase of some desperately needed new bee suits.

Events

We have run a full programme of events this year including:

- winter meetings focussing on bees species other than *apis mellifera* (Nicola Hunt), microscopy (Bob Barnes), the Asian Hornet (Keith Williamson), and one titled "Do bees have ears?" by Margaret Scott.
- our Christmas Dinner - still our best attended event each year!
- a summer barbecue at our apiary
- an extraction day in August to process honey from the club apiary, and demonstrate the process to beginners
- sadly the "bee safari" planned with Stewart Westsmith and Danyal Conn had to be cancelled because they were called to Asian Hornet duties.

We were not able to participate in as many external events as we'd wished, but we are now re-building a team to be ready for next year. Kathy O'Toole and her team had a stall at Knights garden centre in July, the Coulsdon Eco Fair and Kenley Memorial Hall both in October.

Honey shows

The Croydon Honey Show was a great success. We had over 100 entries from 25 different competitors. The room was busy all day with visitors popping in to see the exhibits or to buy honey. We had two junior classes this year which were well supported. Judge Claire O'Brien offered a lot of helpful advice. Prizes were presented by Selsdon Rotary President Cynthia Oteng. The whole day was run by a new sub-committee, and included some modernisations, such as on-line entry forms submission.

We did well at the National Honey Show also. We had several members enter both Surrey and National classes, encouraged by results at our own show. John Mayne was our start with two trophies, and three of the NHS centenary medals. We also won back the Douglas Cup.

Communication

Our committee has been strengthened this year by the addition of Alex de Salis, who joined as our communications coordinator. Alex took over as newsletter editor in May and has maintained our high standard. He has also been active with our website, reinstating it when it was lost because our provider ceased trading.

Anna Slade took over as our Asian Hornet coordinator, and working with Keith Mackie has done a lot to raise awareness amongst our members and the public.

Apiaries

It was with regret that we lost the Crystal Palace Secret garden apiary from the CBKA portfolio. We had invested a lot of time into trying to make a second apiary work, and it would have been a great facility for those for whom travel time to Hartley Down was too long. However, the manager at the apiary decided no longer to keep it as a CBKA activity before we had a contract in place. The committee is currently reviewing our strategy for the North of the borough.

Our Hartley Down apiary has had a brilliant year. The team there has worked hard and the benefits are seen in terms of the appearance, strength of bee stocks, infrastructure and equipment. Derek Read, who has managed the apiary since 2019 has decided not to continue because of his increased family commitments. We thank him for all he has done during his tenure.

Honey yields

It's been a mixed year for our members' honey crops. Some have done well, others have reported not taking a crop at all. Our own apiary produced a small crop, partly due to the weather but also because it's the focus on education.

Member news

We have inaugurated a new trophy for our honey show kindly funded by two generous members. The Mark Stott Cup commemorates Mark's contribution to CBKA. It is presented to the member who scores the most points across all classes, and thus celebrates the inclusiveness that was so typical of Mark's approach. The first winner was Alex de Salis ... of course!

Future strategy

The committee is working well at handling day-to-day decisions, we have built a good team with a common sense of purpose. We now want specifically also to develop a strategy as to how best we can deliver on our charitable objectives. The plan is to hold a strategy day to work on this,

Concluding remarks

I would like to thank again our committee especially my Vice Chair Margaret Scott, and all those members who have made an active contribution to CBKA this year.

Bob Barnes. Chair, Croydon Beekeepers Association
November 2023