



# EPSOM DIVISION SURREY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023

## Chairman's Report

This is my first report as Chair. What a year it has been!

The last 12 months have been particularly challenging for beekeepers in Epsom and across the country. We have faced capricious weather systems which saw extremes of cold and wet in the beginning of the year (and a delayed Spring), then a hot summer followed by an extended autumn which has - to put it mildly - confused plants, animals, and humans. Our bees weren't immune to this and many colonies behaved unpredictably.

On top of this we have had to deal - both psychologically and physically – with a new invasive species which is gaining ground in the UK and threatening bees and other pollinators. It is to the credit of both members and officers that we as Club have faced up to those challenges, got on with the task at hand and continued to take pleasure in our fascinating hobby.

The experiences of the Teaching Apiary team, in its report below, shows how difficult a time it has been. With colony losses and lots of swarms. Including one which set up home in our Clubhouse! Nevertheless, the team has come through with a solid honey harvest for the Club and 9 colonies now set for over-wintering. The Education Team has continued its brilliant work and 2023 saw 5 members pass written and practical exams with credits and a distinction!

Last November's AGM was among the first opportunities we have had to return to larger, face-to-face meetings. During 2023 many of you have dropped into our monthly Club members nights. It is a sadness that numbers participating are not at the pre-pandemic volumes. It is due to the very hard work of the team led by Liz and Helen that these meetings continue to take place. I hope that more of you will take up the opportunity to attend in person to socialise with fellow members and/or to put forward new topic ideas for presentations and discussion.

We have 102 members – may be more (we are still getting final applications). While numbers are slightly down on those of 2022, this is a sizeable group. Many members are content to pursue their interest at a distance from the Club, but many others have actively helped maintain our grounds, clubhouse and in public events – selling honey and talking to the public and special interest groups. We are extra-ordinarily grateful for this,

And we'd like to do more. Building on the success of our improved website and our Instagram presence (which has now grown to 276 followers- including beekeepers in Germany and Australia), we have set up a new Committee Project Group which is looking to exploit social media. We will be creating texts and videos to target groups in our local area - to raise awareness, to draw in new members (and engage with existing ones) – spreading our appeal and linking with common interest groups. We'll start in the coming months. If this is something you are interested in, please let me know.

Our newly refurbished clubhouse kitchen and extraction room has proved an extremely valuable asset. During the year it was awarded a coveted 5-Star food safety rating. The new, large extractor and the refurbished worktop created by Matt have proved very popular. The success of those facilities during harvesting/extracting time is due to the huge amount of time and effort by the team of volunteers who created the online learning materials, instruction videos and the web platform to enable members to

understand equipment, hygiene standards and booking processes. We're evaluating the processes to understand how we might make them even better in 2024.

Led by Helen our volunteer Shop Team has also worked exceptionally hard. The variable weather impacted sales of equipment and honey - with results down on prior year. However, the team is exploring new ways of selling our members' honey and we have a significant stock of 2023 apiary honey to offer to customers going forward. An outstanding development has been the creation and introduction of our on-line shop (for this huge thanks to the team especially our webmaster, Nick). This platform has significantly streamlined shop sales process for both customers and shop volunteers.

We have been very proactive in the emerging campaign to raise awareness of the Asian Hornet. Our Shop Team volunteered our resources as the central hub for the purchase, delivery and collection of special liquid bait designed to attract wasps and hornets. We formed a team of 18 EBKA members to work alongside the Surrey groups to use the bait to create AH monitoring stations in their gardens. To the great relief of all there have not been any local sightings this year. In this last month, other Epsom club members have joined a group to deliver a co-ordinated country-wide communications campaign to enable the public to identify and report the invader.

Finally, after the significant expense of refurbishing our clubhouse kitchen and extraction room last year our Club has finished the 2023 financial year with a cash balance of £18,612 (£5,000 of which is ring-fenced) and profits of £6,171 (2022: £200). During 2024, we plan to employ some of these funds in the painting and upkeep of the Clubhouse building.

I would like thank Linda Hughes for keeping the grounds tidy and Freja Welsby for doing the same for the building. I would like to thank all those who have stepped up to help this year and especially my fellow Committee Members:

Kim Broughton; Fiona Dowle, Nick Fry; Gill Fatcher, Kate Kellett, Liz Knee, Ellie Lodge, Diane Middlecoat, Sam Nicol, Matt Rowden and Helen Worwood

for their personal support ...and for the time and effort they give for the benefit of our Club – I never cease to be amazed at their extraordinary energy and commitment. Liz and Ellie are leaving the Committee and Fiona is stepping down from the role of Joint Secretary. I thank them for their tremendous contributions over the years.

The full reports from the different areas of the Club are below.

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.

*Stuart*

Stuart Gendall

## **Education & Teaching Apiary Report – Liz Knee**

### **1. Education**

Members nights were held on 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 October 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.

In March, three members took Module 6, a written exam in Honeybee Biology and in June, two members took their Basic Practical Assessment. They all worked very hard, and I am proud to say everyone passed ... and some achieved credits and a distinction!

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 while on these 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 2024.

We also carried out several external talks to school children, Scouts, Epsom Rotary, Women's Institute, Probus etc. .

## Courses

- *Beginners Theory/Practical Course*

In January 2023 we took fourteen students for 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.

- *Experience Days*

We held two Experience Days this year - on 21<sup>st</sup> May and 11<sup>th</sup> June - with 16 attendees on each.

I would like to say a very big thank you to all the members who help on the courses and or support with Tuesday Topics. We can only continue to deliver these with your support, enthusiasm, and time.

## 2. Teaching Apiary

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

- Helen Worwood (Theory tutor)
- Mike Hanly
- Nick Fry
- John Fatcher
- Jane Bush
- Jane Powney
- Ellie Lodge
- Liz Knee
- Kathy Gunn

The colonies were regularly attended during the winter of 2022 and into 2023 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. We lost one colony in late January. It was a slow start to the season - the hives were in standing water on 1<sup>st</sup> April !

We finally managed the first full inspection on 4<sup>th</sup> April and found the colonies to be burgeoning with some requiring supers. The first colony swarmed on 22<sup>nd</sup> April; and we needed to split another as it had queen cells. *The fun had begun!* Swarming carried on until late May. Colonies filled the supers and we removed approximately 350lbs of honey. A rota of members and tutors extracted the harvest in one day and it was jarred in a mix of one and half pound jars for sale.

The colonies were generally healthy with seemingly low levels of varroa, but Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus is still circulating in low levels both in the apiary colonies and locally. Due to the shortage of Formic Pro, the colonies were treated with *Apivar* in September - and we will carry out oxalic acid sublimation in December.

The Beginners Practical Course began on 2<sup>nd</sup> April and finished on 9<sup>th</sup> July. Attendees were invited back to help with the honey harvest and varroa treatments and we had a final “social” get together to officially close the course in September. Each Beginner was presented with a jar of apiary honey as a gesture of thanks for their work on the colonies.

The particularly high temperature at the start of September severely impacted the quality of early flowering ivy – the flowers were frazzled! Colonies became short of stores, but we managed to juggle stickies and full frames around to keep them ticking over. We are now topping them up with fondant.

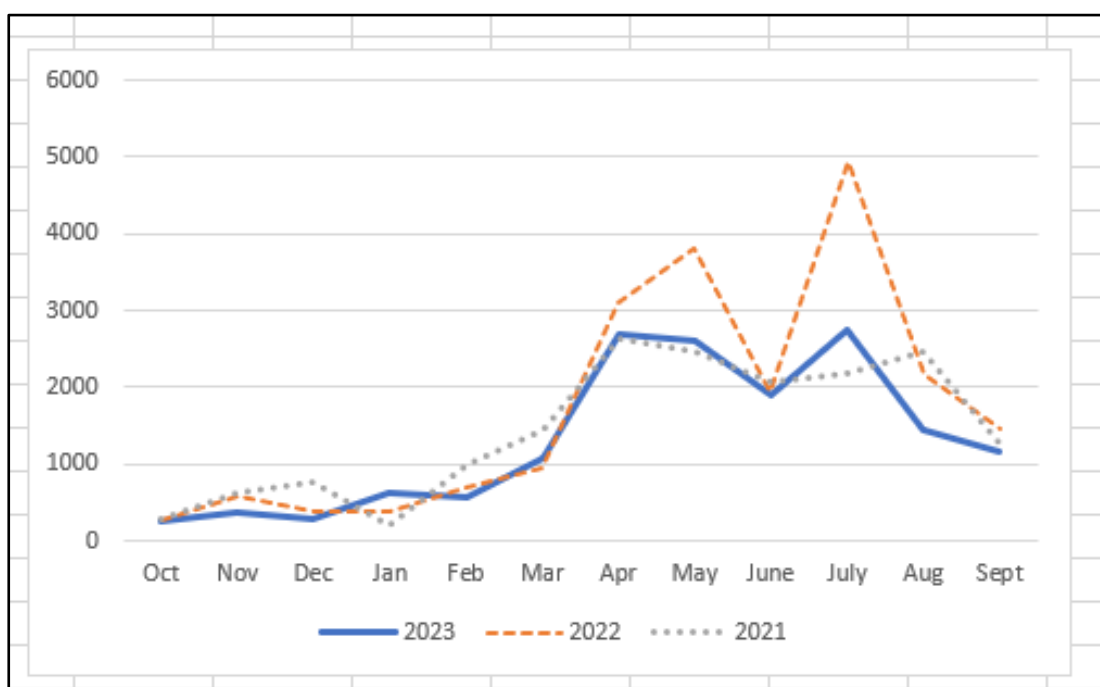
It has been a challenging year and colonies behaved unpredictably for much of it. The wide variation in temperatures and rainfall as well as stressors such as varroa and Chronic Bee Paralysis Virus all impact negatively on general honeybee health and wellbeing. We have finished the season with 9 colonies.

With confirmation of the Asian Hornet in surrounding areas, our winter task will be to research and prepare hive defences/early queen traps in readiness for 2024.

## Apiary Shop - Helen Worwood

I'm starting this report with two “Thank You’s”. First, to our hard-working crew of volunteers Jenny Breese, Gisele Dyson, Linda Hughes, Kate Kellett, Ellie Lodge, Diane Middlecoat, and Sophia Wellsby. Second, to Nick Fry – our webmaster and general all round tech wizard - who has constructed our fabulous web shop.

Sadly, Linda has decided to hang up her shop crew hat, we thank her for her help and hard work and look forward to seeing her as a regular customer from now on. Gill Futchter has already volunteered to step into Linda’s shoes – but I can always find a space for any other willing volunteers – please just let me know.



The solid blue line of sales performance in the graph above shows sales significantly underperforming last year. The late spring meant we saw no boost from people replacing frames as many were simply replacing colonies lost in the cold weather, and lots of swarming meant a smaller honey harvest for many so no boost to July and August sales from Jar purchasing. At the end of September, we had taken £15,724, which is broadly £5,000 (-24%) less than last year and £1,700 less (-10%) than 2021. The slight benefit to us from this is that we have plenty of jars in stock for the 2024 harvest at 2023 prices!

Sales of honey continue to provide a valuable source of income for the association and provide a service to the public. Through the shop we sold £2,496 of honey during the year, which is slightly (10%) down on last

year. This figure includes over £1,000 worth of Apiary honey – significantly more than the £380 we sold in 2022. This shows the value to the club income of the hard work put in by our beginner beekeepers and the apiary tutor group who support and teach them how it's done.

In Autumn 2022 we participated in the first four Ewell Artisan markets and made over £2,000 worth of sales: (£826 of Apiary honey and £1,311 of members honey). Unfortunately, we were unable to continue participating after April 2023.

The market has become a regular feature of village life and gives us an excellent opportunity to engage the public, increase our profile, promote bees and beekeeping, and in future talk about Asian hornet and engage the public in spotting and reporting it, as well as securing funds for the Association from Honey sales. Thanks to those members who have supported with both their honey and time during 2023 and I would appeal for anyone is interested in taking this on to step forward and work with the committee on a plan to keep Epsom Beekeepers at the heart of this event.

For 2023-24 we have a new way of selling members' honey. In future we will pay members a cost price for honey sold through the EBKA Shop and events and will sell to the public at a higher value – essentially making a 10% commission. Had we done this during the current year sales of Members honey at Events and through the shop would have added a further £245 to the Association account.

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 have seen some increase of customers using the online shop to place orders and ensure what they want is available before making the journey to us – but need to continue to promote this to all the other Surrey divisions.

Finally, I have just completed my eighth year as apiary shop keeper and now we have a web shop the manual administration is significantly reduced! This therefore feels like the right time to hand the reins onto someone else to run and continue to grow this income stream for the Association. I am keen to hear from anyone with an interest in taking this on so that you can spend 2024 shadowing me and learning on the job.

## **Webmaster's Report – Nick Fry**

Over the last year we have been busy setting up the online shop, online booking of our extractors/kitchen and now the ability to sell our own and members Honey - a fantastic team effort!

We will be switching on credit card payments for the web shop next month - please pay with a credit card where possible - it will make processing your order in the shop quicker!

A security camera has been installed to the exterior of the apiary. This provides security for the apiary and buildings; it also serves as a deterrent.

On the back of Asian Hornet meetings, another association has created a membership section for their website. We are assessing this currently to see if it's something we can use for EBKA in the future.

We are also currently setting up webcams in the apiary. The aim being to give live streams of cameras set up inside and outside hives. This will let members of the public, other beekeepers to view our cameras, draw traffic and attract new members. The apiary team can also see which hives have swarmed! The current stream from a camera can be found on our homepage or here <https://rtsp.me/embed/8eDGdDnN/>. The bees have moved down so there isn't much to see currently but hopefully there will be later. A second camera will be added to the entrance in the new year.

We are going to trial live streaming the AGM on YouTube for our members who're unable to attend in person. Details will be emailed out nearer the time. It would be good to know if this would be of use to members for the future.

Please email [webmaster@epsombeekers.co.uk](mailto:webmaster@epsombeekers.co.uk) with any ideas or suggestions for future projects.

## Queen Rearing Project – Fiona Dowle

The QRP had another successful season in 2023. The team is comprised Fiona Dowle, Derek Dowle and John Fletcher with valuable advice and support provided by Phil Shepherd.

The Queen Rearing Project started the year with 8 stock hives and 4 overwintered Nucs. As the 2023 season progressed the list of members with interest in Nucs increased and the overwintered Nucs were soon sold.

Through the Spring and Summer, by stock colony splits, new Nucs were set up. Some of the new Nucs were unsuccessful but of those that were we sold 18 Nucs to members. Some of the successful Nucs were retained by the QRP to improve the quality of the QRP's stock hives. We are never sure about the total demand from members, but we fulfilled our list of those members who requested Nucs and any excess Nucs were advertised and sold via the Club's Newsletter.

All the colonies have now been treated for varroa using Apivar strips. Some of the colonies have needed and been given Ambrosia syrup. All the colonies will be checked through the winter to see if they need to be fed with fondant.

The 2023 season has ended with 9 stock hives. We have no Nucs to overwinter this year due to late demand from members.

## Membership Report - Kim Broughton

The profile of our current membership on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 was:

Registered	83
Partner	7
Country	4
Friend	6
Honorary	2
Junior	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>

While we have had a number of new members join our Club, we have unfortunately, seen an overall fall in numbers (2202: 127), as some members stepped back from beekeeping for various reasons.

There was a slight increase in the membership prices for our Registered members due to an additional payment to Surrey BKA for the Honey show, however the non-Registered prices have remained the same.

### Instagram

Our Instagram page has grown significantly – we now have 276 followers. From what we can see of their profiles most are beekeepers and not necessarily in the Epsom area, some are from around the world including Germany, America & Australia .

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

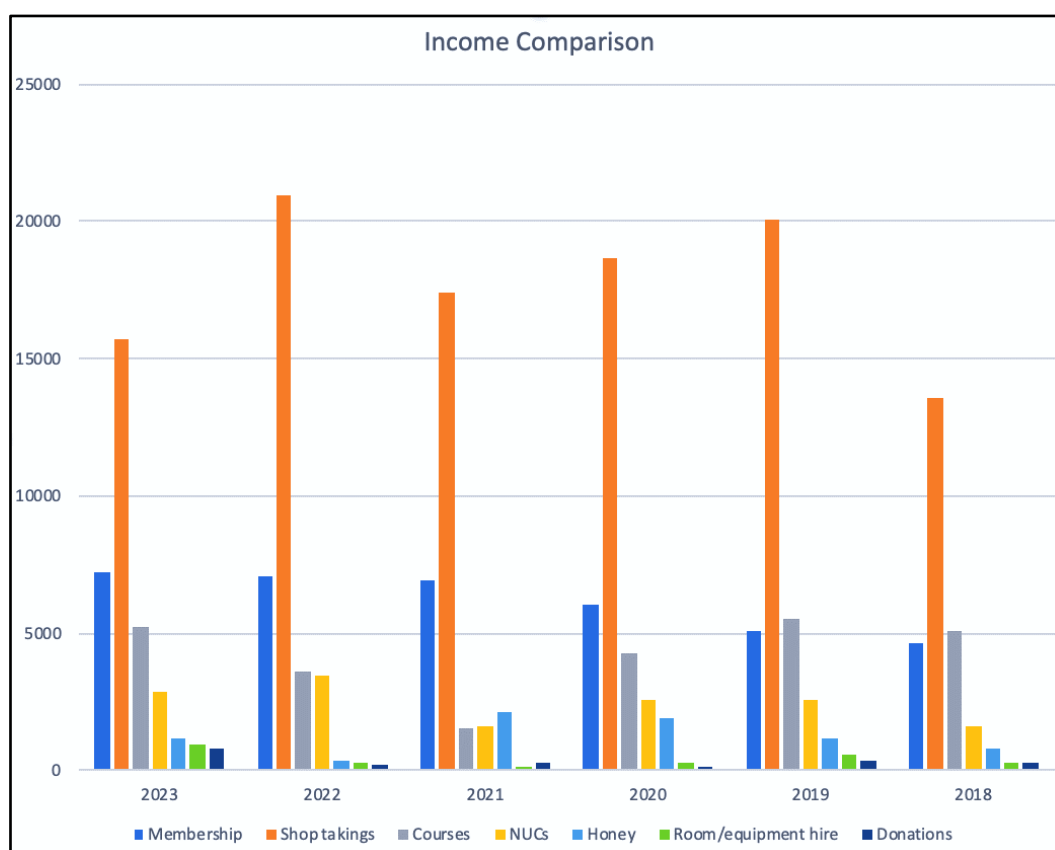
## Financial Report - Kate Kellett

### 1. Cash Position

The 2022-23 financial year finished with a cash balance of £18,612 (£5,000 of which is ring-fenced.)

## 2. Profit and Loss Account

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



As shown in the following table, the annual costs incurred in running the Club, the Apiary and the Queen Rearing Project, amounted to £6,991 (previous year £8,539).

## 3. Costs associated with running the Club, Apiary and QRP

	2023	2022
<b>Utilities</b>		
Cleaning	£528	£538
Gardening	£180	£300
Internet/mobile	£442	£360
Council	£146	£201
Insurance	£1,159	£1,226
Water	£126	£82
Zoom	£0	£144
Electricity	£1,150	£1,260
	<b>£3,730</b>	<b>£4,111</b>
<b>Apiary (see note below)</b>	<b>£163</b>	<b>£507</b>
<b>QRP (see note below)</b>	<b>£23</b>	<b>£71</b>
<b>Club</b>	<b>£1,158</b>	<b>£2,615</b>
	<b>£1,344</b>	<b>£3,193</b>

**Cost of running courses/taster day**

Tutor fee	£1,402	£884
Books and postage	£220	£175
Refreshments	£220	£116
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£1,842	£1,175
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Sub-total	£6,916	£8,479
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Bank charges</b>	£75	£60
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£75	£60
	<hr/>	<hr/>
<b>Total</b>	£6,991	£8,539
	<hr/>	<hr/>

**Note:** The value of stock used by the Apiary (£560) and QRP (£423) is reflected in the net income for the shop and not in the costs above.

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Profit from membership</b>		
Subscription receipts	£7,302	£6,609
Capitation	(£2,572)	(£2,548)
Beecraft	(£2,476)	(£2,385)
BDI	(£342)	(£341)
	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£1,912	£1,335

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Profit from running courses</b>		
Receipts	£5,240	£3,583
Tutor fee	(£1,402)	(£884)
Books and postage	(£220)	(£175)
Refreshments	(£220)	(£116)
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	£3,398	£2,408

	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>Sales of NUCs</b>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	£2,860	£3,465
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**4. Capital Expenditure**

Expenditure on the building and equipment amounted to £27,167, the majority of which was spent on the refurbishment of the kitchen, as well as a new extractor which is available to members to use when they hire the kitchen.

**5. Overall Outcome**

In the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> September 2023, the Club made a profit of £6,171 (previous year was £200.) This was principally achieved due to a reduction in the costs of running the Club; an increase in donations (particular thanks to Zoe Kingham for raising money by participating in a charity run and to Ted Rex for his very kind donation of pottery); an increase in honey sales and increased profit from the courses.

ooOoo