

## WEYBRIDGE DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2023 SBKA AGM

**Financial** The Weybridge division remains in a healthy financial situation. Income was £14.5k and expenditure was £14k. Total reserves are £68k, of which about half is in a fund for the development of a clubhouse for the division.

**Membership** At the end of the 2022/23 financial year, the Weybridge division had 138 members. This is a decrease of five on the previous year, due to fewer members in the Associate and Friends categories. The number of members with bees increased from 115 to 119.

**Committee** The full committee met on 6 occasions during the year.

**Bee health** There appear to be no cases of AFB or EFB in the Weybridge area in 2023. However, it should be noted that for much of the summer and autumn, foulbrood inspectors were busy with Asian hornet work, so fewer visits were made to apiaries. A Nosema diagnosis clinic, held on 4 April, was well attended. Chronic bee paralysis virus seems to be on the increase and was found in the division's teaching apiary in mid summer.

**Bee swarms** The BBKA swarm website page is being used as the first point of contact for people reporting swarms. This directs callers to one of several local swarm collectors. A recruitment drive has added more names to the Weybridge swarm collector list. Household holders with swarms are being invited to make a no-obligation donation to the Weybridge division. Although there were plenty of swarms in 2023, donations were down on the previous year as the cost of living put pressure on people's budgets. Swarms are passed on to new members and those who have had winter losses. Members being given swarms are asked to make a donation that goes to the division, along with covering the expenses of swarm collectors. With EFB having been present in part of our area in previous years, care is taken to put swarms from that area into an isolation apiary until it is confirmed that the bees are healthy.

**Apiaries** The Weybridge division has its longstanding apiary site for members at Row Town. The Apiary Manager is Claire Balla. The division's teaching apiary is now located in the SUEZ Eco Park near Shepperton.. Two taster sessions for prospective new beekeepers were held at the apiary in August.

**New Teaching Apiary and Education Centre/Clubhouse Project** After many years of looking for a more permanent home for the Weybridge division teaching apiary, we are now established in the Eco Park adjacent to the SUEZ-managed recycling and waste disposal centre near Shepperton. The SUEZ management has been very welcoming and has provide a shipping container for equipment storage, with water and electricity supplied. We have also been given access to a meetings room, where the winter theory course will be held. We look forward to developing our relationship with SUEZ and in future make this a beekeeping centre for our activities and for promoting beekeeping to a wider audience.

**Honey Yields** 2023 honey yields for most people appear to be poor to average, rather than good. Many beekeepers experienced high levels of swarming activity during the early part of the season. This and poor weather in July would have affected honey production.

**Honey Shows** The Surrey Honey Show, hosted by the Reigate division, was held on 14<sup>th</sup> October. Weybridge members had firsts in the classes for cut comb, honey cake, beeswax blocks and a display of honey and beeswax products. The National Honey Show was held on 26-28 October, with Weybridge members being among the winners in some of the Surrey classes and achieving some seconds and thirds in the Open classes.

**Asian Hornet Action Team** Information on Asian hornet was given out at the Shepperton Fair on 10 June, at the Summer Festival event in Weybridge on 24 June, and at the Chertsey Agricultural Show on 12-13 August. Talks given to garden clubs, wildlife groups etc have also provided opportunities to promote Asian hornet awareness. No confirmed sightings of Asian hornet were made in the Weybridge division area but two reports were investigated with site visits by members of the Weybridge AHAT. A Surrey AHAT liaison group has been set up with representatives from all eight divisions. It has met on Zoom on five occasions between May and November.

**Education** Eighteen people, including one child, attended the Weybridge winter theory course for new beekeepers. Students who miss a lecture can catch up by watching a video of the lecture that was made during the covid period. The practical sessions were held at our new teaching apiary site in the SUEZ Eco Park near Shepperton during 29 April – 1 July. One practical session incorporated a disease inspection by the Seasonal Bee Inspector. The principal lecturer for the theory course for new beekeepers is Andrew Halstead.

**Web Site** The Weybridge division's website continues to be updated; the address is [www.weybridgebeekeepers.org](http://www.weybridgebeekeepers.org). A password-protected members' area is now in operation. This enables the separation of information that is primarily of interest to members only from pages that are aimed at the wider public. The members' area has been updated so the map showing the location of participating members can also show the location of Asian hornet traps/bait stations and the location of members who hold stocks of the attractant bait. An active Facebook and Twitter/X account is helping to spread awareness of Asian hornet.

**Equipment** Equipment has been purchased for the new teaching apiary. This includes a battery powered trolley for moving equipment etc to and from the apiary.

### Events

17 January Members' evening with short talks by Roy White "A lazy man's hobby (45 years of beekeeping);" Jane Rosser "Travails of a new beekeeper"; Peter Webb "Beehives from around the world" and "Handy hints" from members of the committee.

22 February A bee-themed pub quiz held at The Pelican, Addlestone

27 February Bee diseases and hive pests talk by David Rudland

4 April Nosema diagnosis clinic

29 April Bee practical classes began at the Suez Eco Park teaching apiary

13 May Disease inspection and recognition demonstration by SBI Stewart Westsmith

4 June Garden apiary meeting hosted by Michael Main with a theme of swarm control

10 June Shepperton Fair - sale of honey and Asian hornet information

24 June Weybridge Summer Festival - sale of honey and Asian hornet information

31 July Zoom meeting on chronic bee paralysis disease and current research. Video link <https://youtu.be/TrcjWtFjELc>

10 and 12 August Taster days for potential beekeepers

12-13 August Chertsey Agricultural Show - sale of honey and Asian hornet information

20 August BBQ social event, hosted by Paul and Helen Bunclark

27 August Taster day for SUEZ staff and families

10 September Apiary meeting hosted by Geoff and Marion Cooper at Painshill – preparing bees for winter

14 October Surrey Honey Show at Reigate

26-28 October National Honey Show

5 November Weybridge division AGM – held in person and on Zoom

2 December Weybridge division hosted the SBKA AGM at Cobham Village Hall.

**Andrew Halstead, Chairman, Weybridge Division of Surrey Beekeepers Association  
Chairman Weybridge Division 2023**