

WEYBRIDGE DIVISION ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2024 SBKA AGM

Financial The Weybridge division remains in a healthy financial situation. Income was £17.2k and expenditure was £14.2k. Total funds are £74k, of which about half is in a fund for the development of a clubhouse for the division.

Membership At the end of the 2023/24 financial year, the Weybridge division had 142 members. This is an increase of four on the previous year, due to more members in the Associate and Friends category. The number of members with bees decreased from 117 to 113.

Committee The full committee met on 5 occasions during the year.

Bee health There were no cases of AFB but there were 5 diagnoses of EFB in the Weybridge area in 2024. A Nosema diagnosis clinic, held on 29 April, was well attended. Chronic bee paralysis virus, which was a problem in the division's teaching apiary last year, was not apparent there in 2024.

Bee swarms 2024 seems to have been a less "swarmy" year than last year. The BBKA swarm website page is 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. Householders with swarms are invited to make a no-obligation donation to the Weybridge division. Swarms are passed on to new members and those who have had winter losses. Members being given swarms are asked to make a donation to the division related to the size of the swarm. This covers the expenses of the swarm collectors. With EFB having been present in part of our area, care is taken to put swarms from affected areas 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 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 provided two shipping containers for equipment storage, with water and electricity supplied. We have also been given access to a meetings room, where the winter theory course is 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 2024 honey yields for most people appear to be about average. A notable feature of the 2024 season was the cold wet weather that prevailed during the spring. There was little or no spring flow and many beekeepers were feeding their bees in April-May in order to keep them going.

Honey Shows The Surrey Honey Show, at Denbies Vineyard near Dorking, was held on 1 September. The National Honey Show was held on 26-28 October. Both shows had fewer entries from Weybridge members compared with previous years.

Asian Hornet Action Team Information on Asian hornet was given out at the Shepperton Fair on 8 June, at the Weybridge Community Fair on 22 June, at the Black Cherry Fair, Chertsey on 13 July, at Chertsey Agricultural Show on 10-11 August, and at the Weybridge Christmas Festival on 1 December. 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. Weybridge AHAT members attend Zoom meetings of the Surrey AHAT liaison group. Bonne Maman conserve jars are being collected for use with a plastic insert to make non-lethal Asian hornet monitoring traps.

Education Fourteen people attended the Weybridge winter theory course for new beekeepers and 18 attended the practical classes. 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 teaching apiary site in the SUEZ Eco Park near Shepperton during 20 April – 22 June. 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. Sue Lawes has stood down from administering the course. It is now being administered by Paul Doeman and Steve Brooks; the teaching apiary manager is Christopher Ford.

Web site and social media The Weybridge division's website is www.weybridgebeekeepers.org It has a password-protected members' area that enables the separation of information that is 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 teaching apiary. This includes racking for storing items in the two shipping containers.

Events

- 21 February - Talk by Stewart Westsmith "A Bee Inspector's Experiences with Asian hornet"
- 11 March - Talk by David Rudland on "Bee diseases and hive pests"
- 5 March - Members' evening with short talks by Geoff Cooper "DIY equipment making"; Michael Main "Experiences with swarm collections"; Jonathan Kernon and Nicki Simpson gave us accounts of their experiences as relatively new beekeepers.
- 6 April - Working party at the teaching apiary to clean equipment and assemble frames
- 21 April - Garden meeting hosted by Michael Main; demonstration of swarm control methods
- 29 April - Nosema diagnosis clinic
- 19 May - Demonstration of hive inspections for diseases led by Stewart Westsmith
- 8 June - Shepperton Fair – honey sales and beekeeping/Asian hornet publicity
- 22 June - Weybridge Community Fair – honey sales and beekeeping/Asian hornet publicity
- 13 July - Black Cherry Fair, Chertsey – honey sales and beekeeping/Asian hornet publicity
- 20 July - Working party at the teaching apiary to install racking in the first shipping container, and clean/scorch/brand Weybridge Beekeepers equipment
- 10-11 August - Chertsey Agricultural Show – honey sales and beekeeping/Asian hornet publicity
- 14 and 17 August - Taster days at the teaching apiary for prospective beekeepers
- 25 August - Asian hornet publicity stand at RHS Wisley Garden
- 1 September - Surrey Honey Show at Denbies Vineyard, near Dorking
- 13 October - Working party at the teaching apiary to clean/repair equipment and install racking in the second shipping container, and construct a raised flower bed
- 24-26 October - National Honey Show at Sandown Park, Esher
- 3 November - Weybridge division AGM – held in person and on Zoom
- 1 December - Weybridge Christmas Festival – honey sales and beekeeping/Asian hornet publicity

**Andrew Halstead, Chairman, Weybridge Division of Surrey Beekeepers Association
November 2024**

