



KINGSTON BEEKEEPERS  
ASSOCIATION

## Report to SBKA - 2025

Looking back at my past annual reports it seems that my opening paragraph always starts with something on the lines of “Well, that was an interesting year!” And I don’t think that 24/25 was any different. Avis, the apiary manager, will report on how the odd spring and exceptionally hot summer affected the bees.

I’m pleased to report that Kingston Beekeepers had another year of doing what they are good at, beekeeping, training and supporting beekeepers. The committee continues review our development plan and we hope that this shows in the way we support our members. We offer courses for beginners, courses for those with a little more experience and opportunities to take part in queen rearing. Our one off short “Meet the Bees” taster sessions are always popular and continue to lead a few people into our more formal training.

In addition to courses for our members we try to meet our charitable aim of promoting beekeeping and the importance of pollinators to a wider community. We continue to support local events that allow us to talk to people about beekeeping. We have taken part in the RHS Garden Festival at Hampton Court, the Claygate show, the Surbiton Festival, Kingston Saxon Fayre, schools presentations and conversations with various community groups.

Major events like the RHS Garden Festival at Hampton Court give us the chance to get in front of tens of thousands of gardeners to talk about bees, planting for pollinators and the yellow legged hornet. A small team dealt with the setup and the design included the very popular modified observation hive. For the second year running The Cedar Nursery loaned us a number of large planters and plants that they had previously used at their RHS Chelsea display. Membership support for this event again made it a massive success, over a third of our members volunteered to help out and together we gave 230 hours of our time. The festival is moving to a biennial event, so we will take a break in 2026, but the success of the event and your enthusiasm for it means that we hope to take part in 2027.

While we are talking about events and if you like numbers, I should mention the Surbiton Festival. In this event, addition to being able to show off our bees, we are also able to sell honey. It is a very well attended show with visitors clearly keen to buy locally produced honey. This year we sold 353 jars at the rate of one every 54 seconds!! With a value of nearly £2800!

Three years ago we started a project at the Bentall Centre in Kingston. We worked with the centre management team and installed two hives on one of the second floor balconies. We had initial concerns about the location, two stories up and a bit exposed, but they were well looked after by our three person team and the bees did fairly well. The project gave us the opportunity to connect centre and office staff with the bees and we had longer term plans to allow small school groups to visit. Unfortunately, just as we were about to negotiate a second term the project was “discovered” by a new Health & Safety

team from the management company's head office. Despite our well written risk assessments they were horrified by the potential risks..... bee stings, working at height, smokers etc. all mixed with customers really didn't work for them.... Disappointingly for us and the Bentall Centre staff they refused to negotiate and we were asked to remove the bees at very short notice. The hives are currently residing at the KBKA apiary and the team are looking for a more permanent site.

Last year I reported on the sad loss of our beekeeping friend and "shed man" Chris Reid. You will recall that we had started to plan for a permanent memorial to Chris at the apiary. I'm pleased report that project grew slightly and after a great deal of planning we were able to renovate a whole corner of the apiary site. This included moving and making an additional flaming table, repairing the fence, replanting the hedgerow, sorting out the wonky gate posts, planting some climbing roses and installing a bright blue environmentally friendly recycled plastic garden seat. The seat was formally unveiled by Chris' wife and family at a celebration in May.

While we are talking about successes I should mention both the Surrey and the National Honey show. Our association takes a major role in organising the Surrey Honey Show at Denbigh's and a number of our members entered various classes with some notable successes. In terms of points and awards we came second in the divisional league table, being significantly smaller than most of the other divisions our success rate is out of proportion to our size. It's a really good event and we would encourage members to enter and visit the show next year.

The National Honey Show which is conveniently held just down the road from the apiary is the world's largest honey show and a few days ago it was announced that the show has been awarded the King's Award for Voluntary Service for 2025. In effect this is the MBE for voluntary groups, and is the highest award that a voluntary group can receive in the UK. The NHS is one of only 232 charities to receive the award this year. Again members of Kingston Beekeepers have been supporting the event of years, thanks go to Clive, Adela, Barry, Tom and Alison for the work that they put into the show. In addition to volunteering our members also enter the show classes with some success, congratulations go to our members who between them won multiple prizes and trophies. Again we encourage our members to enter and attend the event, this useful, interesting, educational and slightly eccentric show.

Every year in preparation for this report I look back at the notes from our committee meetings and I'm always surprised and impressed at how much the association gets done. In an attempt to measure our impact Jane collates some of the numbers, Jane likes numbers.... This year our teaching and training courses clocked up nearly 530 person hours. We had 25 Saturday sessions at the apiary, it would have been 30 if the weather hadn't been so extreme, that worked out at 1139 person hours. If you add shows and social events it comes up to 2365 hrs of time we spent talking about and working with bees! We also sold 900 jars of honey, bred 7 of our own queens, gave out over 4000 Killer Queen Yellow Legged Hornet leaflets and it's estimated that on Saturday afternoons we ate about 67 cakes.

But numbers are just one measure of how well we are doing. The real indicator is shown in the level of support that we give to our members. Feedback from those on our courses and the energy that we see at the apiary on Saturday afternoons suggests that we are doing OK. It would be easy to think that our success is a happy accident but we all know

that it isn't. The AGM is my opportunity personally and on your behalf to thank the KBKA committee.

Without the quiet efficient work that the committee do Kingston beekeepers would not be the successful and supportive association that it is.

Martyn Milner  
Chair, Kingston Beekeepers

### **APIARY MANAGERS' REPORT to KBKA AGM - 2025.**

Another beekeeping year has rolled by and the challenges have been a mild wet winter followed by a hot dry summer. Research has shown that *apis mellifera mellifera*, northern European honeybees dislike temperatures above 32 C as much as beekeepers in bee suits and wellies and both reduce their activity accordingly. The spring stores were mostly consumed as the nectar sources dried up. A few swarms were collected as requested from the general public but swarming in the apiary definitely did not take place on Saturdays and must have surreptitiously occurred on week days.

The policy of leaving sufficient stores on the hives for the winter was continued and colonies regularly checked and fed, where necessary, through to the spring. Winter losses (2 colonies died) were low again and insulating the hives with wool packaging seemed to work well. The varroa boards were also left in as a useful way of assessing the activity of the colonies.

Improved monitoring and recording of varroa levels was attempted. Chewed, discarded larvae were seen in hive 13 and breeding took place from this colony as an attempt to produce varroa resistant queens and bees. For some years now only one annual treatment has been carried out and this year we again used formic pro. It is convenient, quick, and queens did not disappear although treatment was delayed until the cooler weather.

The Beginners' Theory Lectures were held at Imber Court, a very convenient location. They were well attended and thoroughly enjoyed by all. The lectures commenced in February, which was an improved starting date as the practical continued with only a very short break.

Four training evenings were held for those taking the Basic Assessment and two Saturday morning The Wonder of Bees were held. Both mornings were fully booked and very successful.

Extraction training day was again held in August at Claygate Village Hall and approximately 150 lbs was harvested efficiently except when we ran out of sieves, but more will be purchased. The delivery and distribution of jars was amazing and thanks to Habel and Iain for superb organisation. They are now retiring and we are looking for volunteers to take on this very valuable service to members.

Two other courses ran concurrently with the beginners on Saturday afternoons, the queen rearing and intermediates. A record number of queens were produced and the training apiary has not purchased queens from other sources for a number of years now. Our aim is still to supply beginners with nucs and members with queens and progress is being made. There is great enthusiasm for these courses with members learning by practical experience of bees and their devious ways of outwitting homo sapiens.

The equipment is well maintained and cleaned and some replacements have been purchased. The tool boxes are going to be restocked and more purchased. Twenty floors are going to be bought from the same manufacturer to enable varroa boards and entrance blocks to be interchangeable. The present variety of floors, boards and blocks causes frustration and takes time. Using sulphur in the stacks of supers has been very effective against wax moth and is an efficient method.

The extension of the flaming table has proved very useful and saved some aching backs. The summer weather was not conducive to encouraging the newly planted hawthorn bushes to thrive despite being meticulously watered. The issue of a prickly barrier or hedge round the boundary of the apiary is ongoing as some areas are still very weak. However, the apiary looks spectacular at present after the tidy up day and the visit of the arboretist to trim the hawthorne hedges and remove some of the lower branches of the oaks. The oak processionary moth continues to thrive unfortunately and areas in the apiary will be taped off to avoid the irritating hairs.

Other activities have been supplying observation hives for Hampton Court Flower Show and the Surrey Honey Show, hive 6 proving remarkably sociable and seemingly enjoyed its outings.

The apiary is supported by the apiary team who act as instructors on the courses, mowing the grass, repairing equipment, purchasing syrup - the list is endless. All this is done in the spirit of sharing our knowledge and experience because we are passionate about beekeeping and we enjoy what we do. Everyone on the courses has been committed, enthusiastic, keen to learn and a joy to work with. There has been some fantastic team work and the best supply of cake we can ever remember.

Thanks to everyone who attended on Saturday afternoons - hope you all enjoyed it as much as we did.

Avis and David Marshall