

MEDWAY AND COUNTY KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2017

Committee 2017

- President: Pip Blaxland
- Honorary Vice President: Richard Andrews
- Chairman: John Chapman
- Treasurer: John Hendrie
- Secretary: Sheila Stunell

Members:

- Mark Ballard
- Anthony Edwards
- Jennifer Ferry
- Elaine Laight
- Kay Wreford

Website & Newsletter Editor: Paul Lawrence

Examinations Officer : Terry Clare

Chairman’s Report

Welcome the 2017 annual report. I hope your bees did better than in 2016 were able to do better towards the end of the season with the better conditions in late summer. I hope for better season in 2018.

This year our membership stands at 103, of which 80 are full members, 19 are associate members, 3 are honorary members and 1 is a junior member.

The committee has met seven times during the year to arrange the programmes for the winter and summer and plan for the events that the association attended. There were six indoor meetings during the winter months covering the following topics – Alien Invaders (Asian Hornet and small Hive Beetle), Bee Disease, Varroa Control (the more modern ways), Preparing for Winter, Wax Collection and Uses e.g. Candle making and an Autumn Fair.

We visited three members’ apiaries during the summer months. The Association Apiary ran 8 well-attended open afternoons, as well as the regular weekly inspections carried out by the Apiary team. We try to link each meeting with a topic or theme relevant to the beekeeping season.

Throughout the year, we undertook the following events:-

- English Festival held at the Riverside Park,
- Kent Agricultural Show.
- Own Honey show at Elmcourt Garden Centre.
- Rochester and Gravesend Ploughing Match held at Newlands Farm, Cliffe.

Thanks must go to all those members who supported us at the stands, answering questions, providing information and ably rolling candles with young people during the day.

The Kent Beekeeping Associations moved into the Garden Life Marque. This caused a lot of extra work for those organising the tent and live bee demonstrations. I was very pleased at how many of our members volunteered to help steward at the show and provided honey and other honey related products for sale. The live bee demonstrations run by Terry Clare with his team of volunteer demonstrators, were a notable success at the show and were watched by a record number of visitors over the three days of the show. The gate numbers were reported as being over 80,000 and we estimated that at least 2,000 people watched the live bee demonstrations. Some of our members entered the Kent Honey Show and were successful in gaining place cards. Our efforts were highly appreciated by the large number of visitors that we had over the 3 days.

The association held our own honey show at Elmcourt Garden Centre in September. The committee thanks the Garden Centre's management for allowing us to hold our show on their premises and to Sue Chapman for doing all the Show Entries and keeping the records of past shows. There were 75 entries staged from 15 exhibitors. Our novice beekeepers were well represented. Paul Lawrence successfully gained a First for his honey and a free entry to the National Honey Show. Four of our members entered the National Honey Show held at Sandown Racecourse. Both Anthony Edwards and Paul Lawrence were awarded cups in the Kent County Section of the show

Our 94th Annual dinner held in November was ably organised by our Secretary Sheila Stunell and Paul Lawrence. Our Trophies from the Show and examination certificates were presented by Mrs Daphne Blaxland. Instead of a speaker, we had a musical entertainment organised by Anthony Edwards, which was enjoyed by all those present. The dinner was a great success and enjoyed by those able to attend. It was a pity that so few of our members were present.

Our beginners' course, run by Terry Clare, has continued to attract new people to beekeeping and the committee thanks him for continuing with this commitment. Our members have achieved success in the BBKA Examination Modules. The committee wishes to express its thanks to Bob Smith and team for co-ordinating an improver's course this winter. Unfortunately there were no candidates in the basic assessment this year.

Our swarm Liaison with Medway Council has terminated, and we are running our own system. This will be reorganised using a system based on our old system.

Our Apiary Site worked well with 8 well-attended open afternoons. The colonies are regularly inspected by an able group of volunteers, co-ordinated by Elaine Laight. Our team of site management volunteers are doing a very good job looking after the site. Our thanks must go to Ray Cass for undertaking the role of regular grass-mower on the site. In 2017, the team raised 2 nuclei for sale and some honey as appears in the accounts.

The Association was represented at the Annual Delegates Meeting in January by Sheila Stunell, our Secretary. Her report is in our annual report. John Hendrie, our Treasurer, retired as President of the BBKA.

The Committee wishes to thank all those members who have helped in anyway during the year in enabling the association to function.

John Chapman

Website and Newsletter Report 2017

This year we have continued to improve the information on the site and to make it clearer to visitors. We have now acquired the rights to the domain name 'medwaybeekeepers.com' and have linked our two domains.

The website this year has incurred expenditure of £90. Which is the annual charge for both domains. We have been able to keep this figure relatively low, as I have become more proficient and capable of making edits and updates on my own. However, future costs may be higher at times and will of course be largely dependent on how the website is developed to meet future needs.

We again sent out membership renewals, AGM information and the monthly newsletter digitally this year. This continues to make a significant cost saving,

We have continued to post out via Royal Mail to five members who have problems accessing information digitally.

The website is experiencing many more 'hits' as members and others see it as the place to go for information. We have recently set up a Facebook page for the use of members and this is currently under development.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have taken the time to help, support and advise me on the content of both the website and newsletter and who have submitted items for publication.

Paul Lawrence

Apiary Report

Throughout 2018 the apiary has continued to progress well. There has been significant improvement in communication between the apiary inspectors and this has enabled a more consistent and co-ordinated approach to the management of the bees. This area will continue to develop with Jen Ferry and Sheila Stunell jointly taking the role of apiary manager for 2018.

The number of colonies increased from two to three with an additional three nucs. Two of the nucs were sold on whilst the third was reunited with one of the colonies, thereby leaving three colonies to start the new year.

The monthly site meetings have proved very successful and have been attended by new and experienced beekeepers. Topics covered have included drone inspection, varroa monitoring, swarming and making nucs. These sessions will continue next year and the dates will be published in the newsletter,

After a disappointing honey yield in 2016 the bees have proved to be more productive this year. Honey sales have raised £362.25 and together with the sale of nucs the apiary has an income of £542.25. With expenditure for equipment of £546.20. This results in an overall loss of less than £5. Some honey remains unsold. Honey extracted from the apiary in spring 2017 was entered in the Kent County Show and won the class.

A new site for the apiary which will offer better facilities e.g electricity, water, toilets etc, is currently being sought. The aim is to increase awareness and make beekeeping accessible to the public for educational purposes.

Finally, more volunteers are needed to assist with the upkeep of the apiary and inspection of the bees. At present a very small group of members undertake this task and it would lessen the demands on individuals if the team of volunteers could be expanded.

Elaine Laight

Winter Studies Report

Module 7 Selection & Breeding of Honeybees

Thirteen members from across Medway and Gravesend Beekeeping Associations took up the invitation to participate in the Winter Study Group for 2016/17 studying BBKA Module 7 - Selection and Breeding of Honeybees. This was a very good number given how technical the subject was.

The course was run from October to March, with two-hour sessions held once a fortnight at Wainscot Memorial Hall. Bob Smith led on the teaching and called on Julie Coleman for some of the specialist lectures on genetics. Tony Edwards ably took care of the logistics. MBKA once again underwrote the cost of hiring the hall leaving the participants just a small amount to contribute toward refreshments.

This was a very difficult module and from the outset several of the group declared that they were there for the learning but would not be sitting the exam at the end.

Subjects covered included

- ❖ Principles of the selection of breeder queens and drones
- ❖ Methods of queen rearing, including the use of nucs & mini nucs
- ❖ Understanding of sub species and strains of honeybees commonly used in Europe
- ❖ An understanding of Mendelian genetics
- ❖ Reproductive systems of queen & drone
- ❖ Mating behaviour of the honeybee
- ❖ Dealing with queenless colonies
- ❖ Distinguish between queen cells produced under emergency, supersedure and swarm impulses
- ❖ In-breeding in bees
- ❖ Effects of pathogens & disease on bee breeding.

Text books on these areas were added to the library and several members purchased their own to support their learning.

About half the group opted to sit the exam, which was an hour and a half long paper. There was much discussion and debate as we came to grips with the topics and tried to answer questions on past papers. Four of the group went on to pass the exam in March 2017 – two with credit and a further two sat and passed the exam in November.

As a group we learnt much about the science of honeybee breeding and the difference between this and queen rearing - this will contribute greatly to our practices as beekeepers.

Jen Ferry

Mentor/Bee Buddy scheme

The mentoring scheme is now in its second year and is growing slowly. We have been able to match those that have enquired with a suitable, more senior beekeeper mentor and this has proved very successful.

We can all learn from those that have more experience than us and sometimes just working with a beekeeper of equal knowledge and practice enables us to learn from each other.

The mentoring initiative aims to offer every new member a named mentor who will support and assist them as they develop. It has been reported that those mentoring have also benefited by brushing up on the knowledge and skills they are sharing.

If you are either wanting a mentor, or if you have some experience and would like to be a mentor, please get in touch with Jen Ferry. You do not need to be a Master Beekeeper – anyone with a couple of years' experience (and the Basic qualification) has lots of knowledge and skills that others would like to learn from.

Jen Ferry

Annual Delegates Meeting 2018

The Annual Delegates' Meeting 2018 took place on 13 January at Myton School in Warwickshire.

Election of Executive committee.

Four members were elected for four years:

Howard Pool	47 votes
Pam Hunter	35 Votes
Suzanne Bennet	33 Votes
Walaa Elsayeh	27 votes

One member for two years

Anne Rowberry

One member for one year

Diane Drinkwater

Appointments to the Examination Board

Jule Coleman	52 Votes
David Rayner	50 Votes
Shirley Bond	42 Votes

Applications for affiliated status

Association	For	Against	Abstained	
Alnwick	61	3	0	Carried
Hexham	59	5	0	Carried
Tyneside	59	9	2	Carried

Election of President

Candidates	For	Abstained	
Margaret Murdin	30	35	Carried

Propositions

The Executive Committee Propose that the surplus fund from IMYB are marked to promote beekeeping for young people

An amendment was suggested

The Executive Committee Propose that the surplus fund from IMYB **or its named successor** are marked to promote beekeeping for young people

Motion (amendment)	For	Against	Abstained	
	53	7		amended

Amended Motion	For	Against	Abstained	
	56	2	2	Carried

Proposition: The BBKA must immediately seek evidence from the relevant authorities of the robustness of the process for issuing the Bee Health Certificate in order to avoid the importation of any products which could lead to the introduction and spread of bee pests and diseases into the country.

Motion	For	Against	Abstained	
Devon	48	10	3	Carried

Proposition: The BBKA must adopt an active programme of publicity to inhibit and discourage the importation of bees until satisfied that there is no risk of accidental importation of any products which could lead to the introduction and spread of bee pests and diseases into this country.

The motion was amended to omit the words "of any products"

Motion (amendment)	For	Against	Abstained	
	52	8	3	Amendment carried

Motion as amended	For	Against	Abstained	
Devon	57	5	1	Carried

Proposition: The Trustees of the BBKA being the 'Ultimate Controlling Party of BBKA Enterprises Ltd to instruct the Directors of the BBKA Enterprises Ltd to include with financial statement extra narrative and notes as a separate document in the ADM pack so that more detailed of income and expenditure can be given.

Motion	For	Against	Abstained	
Suffolk	20	42	3	Not carried

Proposition: The Executive Committee propose that the suspension of Ian Home as a trustee be confirmed

The details of this situation were given to the ADM. These involved a letter written by Margaret Murdin and an issue of inappropriate language used to members of the BBKA staff.

Both parties were given time to speak to the issues and witnesses were called. Following the response by Ian Homer to the letter sent it was agreed by the executive that he should be suspended. An investigation into his behaviour using inappropriate language with the staff was also investigated hence the need to confirm his suspension.

Following the constitution, for the vote to be carried it would need a two thirds majority.

On the proposition that Mr Homer be suspended the vote went against the proposition and was not carried.

On the proposition that Mr Homer be removed as a trustee, the vote went against the proposition by a two thirds majority.