

MEDWAY AND KENT COUNTY BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION

Committee 2018

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
Bob Smith.

Website & Newsletter Editor: Paul Lawrence

Examinations Officer : Bob Smith

Chairman's Report

Welcome to our 2018 annual report. I hope your colonies did better this year after the "Beast from the East" started the season off to a very cold period. Certainly from the reports that I have heard colonies recovered well and were able to do better towards the end of the season with the better conditions in late summer. I hope for better season in 2019.

This year our membership is at 129, of which 81 are full members, 44 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. Some of the topics were Extracting and Cleaning Wax and Candle-making, Spring flowers for Colony Health, Making a Buzz along the Coast Winter, Basic Honey and Wax preparation for showing and our increasingly popular Autumn Fair.

We visited three members' apiaries during the summer months, not all of which were as well attended as we would have liked to see. 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.
- And a Social Visit to Chapel down Winery.

Thanks must go to all those members who supported us at the above events.

We were well represented at The Kent Agricultural Show, where we join with the other beekeeping associations in Kent in the Garden Life Marquee. 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. As the marquee was moved to a new location, we did not think it wise to run the live bee demonstrations. Unfortunately, the new position of the marquee resulted in a reduction in the number of visitors that found us. Some of our members entered the Kent Honey Show and were successful in gaining place cards. Our efforts were highly appreciated by visitors over the 3 days, especially the willingness of stewards to talk to the the.

The association held its 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 94 entries staged, 6 more and we could have asked for a "Blue Ribbon," to be awarded. Elaine Laight s gained a First for her honey and a free entry to the National Honey Show. Some of our members entered the National Honey Show held at Sandown Racecourse. Sue Chapman being awarded the McCormick Cup, for two square sections free from ling heather honey.

Our 95th Annual dinner and Presentation of Trophies and Certificates was held in October. The event was ably organised by Jennifer Ferry, Sheila Stunell and Jennifer's family. Unlike previous years, this was a catered for by Jen and her family. Our trophies from the show and examination certificates were presented by Mrs Kay Wreford, our Regional Bee Inspector. Instead of a speaker, we had a quiz, organised by Bob Smith and Jen's son-in-law Brandon (who also introduced the evening and explained the new system). The evening was a great success and enjoyed by 48 members.

Our beginners' course, run by Bob Smith and team, has continued to attract new people to beekeeping and the committee thanks them for 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.

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, a report on our system is included later in the report.

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 Mark Ballard for undertaking the role of Apiary Manager. In 2018, they produced some honey as appears in the accounts.

The Association was represented at the Annual Delegates Meeting in January 2018 by Sheila Stunell, our Secretary. Unfortunately, Sheila is unable to attend for the 2019 meeting, so I shall be going in her stead. My report is included in our annual report.

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

Website and Newsletter Report 2018

This year we have continued to improve the information on the site and to make it clearer to visitors. We have now purchased an SSL certificate which makes the site much more secure. We have also, in line with GDPR legislation, posted new 'Terms and Conditions' for those visiting the site along with a new 'Privacy Policy' and 'Cookies Policy'.

The website this year has incurred expenditure of £140. Which is the annual charge for both of our domains (medwaybeekeepers.co.uk and medwaybeekeepers.com) plus a one off £50 charge for the SSL certificate. This figure continues to be relatively low, as we make more edits and updates on our own.

In the coming year we will be looking at providing a secure area for members to use. Which will enable us to provide better and more detailed information regarding courses etc and hopefully more simpler methods of applying for services.

However, this will result in higher future costs 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 seven members who have problems accessing information digitally.

The website has again this year experienced more 'hits' as members and others see it as the place to go for information and the Facebook page is proving ever more popular. My personal thanks to Sonia Belsey for the great job she is doing in keeping this side of our communications up to date and fresh-looking.

We have delivered the Monthly Newsletter consistently on time this year and it just seemed to grow in size as the year went by. This is undoubtedly a consequence of the wider range of activities we have undertaken this year.

I would like in closing this report to take the 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

Website Manager and Newsletter Editor

17'01'2019

MBKA Annual Report for AGM

Education

A lot has been achieved during the last year and at the outset I want to thank the huge input from a keen and active Education Team – Jen, Mark, Tony and Sheila with support also from Elaine, John Chapman and Paul Lawrence.

The 2017/18 15-strong Winter Study group broke from tradition and rather than studying for a BBKA Module, followed a series of sessions intended to be relevant to “Improvers”. This was not an examination course but we covered key aspects of management, from swarm control to disease recognition and dealing effectively with varroa, in all cases going into a little more detail and debate than introductory courses allow.

Starting a little later than ideal, we designed and ran an “Introduction to Beekeeping” which attracted a keen contingent of local would-be beekeepers; we had to cap numbers at 24 and start a waiting list. This evening course over 6 consecutive Mondays was well-received and several graduates started with bees in 2018, others planning to do so in 2019. A course textbook and Affiliate MBKA Membership were included in the course fee; this did generate a boost to membership numbers and to Education funds.

A post-course review suggested some modifications in approach for this year; these are in train for the again over-subscribed course due to start on 11th March.

Eight members received a little coaching and were successful in the BBKA Basic Assessment, six at the Credit level. Congratulations to all of them. Similar coaching will be available in 2019 – just let me know if you could be interested.

The 2018-19 Winter Study course is under way, this time using the BBKA Module 2 syllabus as a template for an examination of “Honey bee products and forage”; many of the participants are planning to take the Module in March. The original invitation to Members drew a limited response so it was opened up to neighbouring associations and several members of Gravesend BKA and Mid-Kent have contributed to an enthusiastic study group.

That then is the factual part of the Education year but it has become clear that the current model is failing properly to equip new entrants to the craft with the skills, knowledge and confidence that are necessary. Much discussion has taken place and changes will be introduced this year to the Introductory course, mainly to

- Reduce the non-essential information (such as 8 UK hive types/frame sizes)
- We will recommend and demonstrate with National 14x12
- A simple method of increase and a simple method of queen replacement will be included; we aim to make MBKA members self-sufficient
- We will support graduates of the course as they become beekeepers

We have another 24 would-be beekeepers signed up for the 2019 course and a waiting list; it is clear that we can run courses for people beyond our capacity to support them and that is not something

we wish to do. Accordingly Tony has circulated a note asking for existing members to consider helping out by becoming “bee buddies” – just someone these complete novices can turn to for guidance and advice during their first year as a beekeeper.

If you haven’t done so already, please give this some thought and let Tony know – if we can’t support novice beekeepers we may have to ration spaces on the course more dramatically.

Beekeeping is something we never “get right”, but we can try! It is a privilege for us to work with colonies of social insects and to learn ways in which that can be a profitable partnership.

Bob Smith

Apiary Report for 2018.

Generally it has been quite a good year.

We went through winter 2017 with three colonies, but unfortunately colony number 3 died out in March.

The colony appeared to have dysentery, I did a microscopic test for Nosema, but could find no trace of Nosema spores

Colony no 1 is on National

Colony 2 on National 14 x12

We gained a strong Nuc in April (a split from Mark Horner’s very strong colony) which was hived in a WBC. Colony number 3

Colony 2 was quite small and appeared queen-less. A 50mm square of eggs was taken from colony 3 and put into a brood frame in 2. A queen was raised successfully.

We gained 3 more swarms in May/June

Colony 4 is on National

Colony 5 on WBC

Colony 6 was a NUC (now colony 3)

The queen in colony 3 became a drone layer and this colony was lost.

We currently have 5 healthy colonies

Colony 1 – National

Colony 2 – National 14 x 12

Colony 3 – WBC 14 x 12

Colony 4 – National

Colony 5 – WBC 14 x 12

A reasonable quantity of honey was produced. 10 jars were given to Mrs Patching (rent) 2 jars were given to each of the 3 neighbours.

The rest of the honey which been bottled was sold and also two supers were sold to members

All colonies were treated with MAQS 04/09/2018

Colonies 2,3,4 and 5 fed with fondant 09/01/2019

All hives were fitted with mouse excluders in the Autumn.

Currently no wood-pecker damage.

I had concerns about integrity of the pond liner, but it does appear to be holding water

The mower has now been serviced and a new throttle cable fitted

I need volunteers to assist with the running of the Apiary. Although I have sterilised brood boxes/supers and made brood/super frames there is still more work to be done.

A date needs to be set for the Spring Apiary clean up

No 217 City Way is up for sale and I have been told that all prospective purchasers have been informed about the Apiary

Mark Ballard – 16th. Jan 2019

Swarm Phone Report.

In 2016, Medway Council passed responsibilities for its services including Pest Control to Norse. As a result, we lost the link to the council's pest control team and the corresponding donation to our funds that the council made. Your committee decided to continue offering a swarm collection service to the Medway Council area and devised a scheme of contactable numbers to a group of members to collect swarms and deal with other bee related problems. A set of photos of bees, bumble bees and wasps was put onto our website along with a list of contactable numbers of members prepared to answer calls about bee related issues. The result was that some members became overwhelmed by calls.

This year, the committee decided to run a dedicated phone to receive bee calls on from the public. The member holds the phone for a week collects and records calls then passes these on to members, who are willing to collect swarms in their area. All swarm collectors use a set of instructions based on the BBKA guide to best practice. This has worked much better and resulted in a more workable level of demand. So that this year, we collected some 16 swarms, advised on how to deal with bees in buildings in 11 occasions and dealt with 20 other honey bee related calls. This gives a total of 47 honey bee related calls. We also received 12 calls about bumble bees to which advice was given and no wasp calls during the season. This is a much improved result than in 2017.

My thanks to all those, who made the system work during the season and to Sheila for providing the phone and sorting-out a phone contract that pays for the calls.