

BBKA

REIGATE DIVISION

OF SURREY BEEKEEPERS ASSOCIATION

Chairman's Report for 2009

Membership

At the end of our financial year we had a total of 162 members comprising 118 registered members, 11 partner members, 4 country members, 13 associate members, 14 friends of Reigate and 2 hon. members.

The Mickleham Apiary, Brockham, Buckland and Vigo Farm

Once again, we are grateful to Boxhill School for the use of our apiary site and for the use of their classrooms for bee clinics and lectures, to Martin and Louise Smith for the use of the Brockham site, to Mr and Mrs Laurenson for access to Buckland and Nick McGill for our site at Vigo Farm, South Holmwood.

Our Wednesday evening meetings this summer have regularly attracted over 50 members. As always, it is encouraging to see so many enthusiastic newcomers.

Once again, Tim Hall and Andrew Buchanan made sure the bee sheds remained in orderly condition and every time we had visitors they commented on the high standards Tim and Andrew maintain.

It is important to remember that it is not Tim or Andrew's job to clean used equipment. That is part of bee husbandry. Any member returning equipment to a shed should take personal responsibility for cleaning it. Thanks are also due to Andy Robinson and Malcolm Fry for their considerable work, behind the scenes, at Mickleham and our 'out' apiaries.

Cyril Humphries has kept the grass trimmed and tidy in the Mickleham apiary and kept the hedges neat. Thank you Cyril for all your hard work. It is much appreciated.

Training and education

A number of members have given talks to schools and other groups in the course of the year and our members gave at least a dozen talks to Women's Institute groups prior to their AGM motion in support of honey bees. Our apiaries have once again been used and our members featured to promote honey bee issues on radio and TV.

Winter beginners' course

Our January 2009 course was run by our Regional Bee Inspector, Alan Byham, ably assisted by Carol. Our beginners are very lucky to have had such a good start to their beekeeping. Thanks Alan and Carol. A good proportion of the course members joined us for practical sessions at Mickleham and have become valued members of the division. We also welcome the new members who joined us during the summer. Demand for courses this summer has been unprecedented. We ran a taster day on 16th May which was attended by 36 people. We have put on an extra ten week course in the autumn in addition to our usual January course. Both these are fully booked and we have a waiting list for our next taster day in spring. Given that around half the course members join us for weekly practical sessions we will be challenged to provide enough teaching next season.

Our regular pre-season frame making and apiary introduction afternoon in March was enthusiastically received by the winter course members and we were able to take a look in the hives. Thanks to all who helped out on the day.

With an eye to future members, we ran a taster day on 16th May with 36 participants. We have laid on an extra 10 week winter course in the autumn to supplement our usual January course – both of these are fully booked and we already have more enquiries for beginner's courses; quite how we will cope with practical teaching in 2010 remains to be seen.

Beginners at Mickleham

As previously, two hives were allocated to beginners, led by experienced beekeepers, Audrey Gill and Mike Hill. As usual these have been very popular groups.

Basic Assessment Group

Paul Cleaver and Adam Leitch continued with their 2008 beginners groups and took them through to British Beekeepers Association Basic Assessment standard. Maintaining the continuity of having the same instructor for two years from complete beginner to taking the 'basic' appears to be popular. Thanks to both of you.

Audrey Gill, whose many roles include that of County Examination Secretary, organised a 'mock basic' exam at Mickleham on 27th June and the group were 'grilled' on a round robin basis. The event was, as always, open to other divisions and was well attended. All those who came achieved a pass. (Note for next year's candidates – we have run these 'mocks' for four years and so far, everyone who has attended has passed the real thing).

Nine Reigate members passed their Basic Assessments: Jack Chapman, Gerald Gardiner, Emily, Jessica and Gwyn Gould, Janet Jones, Lindsey Ann Jones, Coral Lloyd and Brian Wilcox. Well done to you all.

Inevitably we gain and lose members but we maintain a high percentage of members holding the basic certificate. Currently, 49 of our members and associates hold the 'basic'. A number hold higher qualifications. To put that in perspective, less than 15% of the B.B.K.A. membership holds the 'basic' and it is believed that about half of Britain's beekeepers belong to the BBKA! What's the point of the 'basic'? Well, it makes sure you have a sound general knowledge of beekeeping and in these litigious times it is proof of your competence.

Audrey Gill, Adam Leitch and I conducted a number of basic assessments for other divisions in Surrey and neighbouring counties. I think, in terms of numbers of candidates examined, Audrey and I are in the top five nationwide in terms of candidates assessed.

Husbandry

This year, Paul Cleaver passed the BBKA General Husbandry Assessment. Usually, less than 20 people nationwide attempt this and around 10 pass. This is a great achievement – well done Paul. RBKA now has 5 active members qualified to this level. Most associations would be pleased to have one!

Modules

Several members are beavering away at the theory modules. We have four members qualified to intermediate standard. This year Reigate members achieved 8 module passes including Adam Leitch who passed three in one go and Celia Perry who was one of the very few to achieve a distinction in module one. Why not have a go at a module yourself? The depth of knowledge you absorb will enhance your enjoyment of beekeeping.

Senior group

As usual, our senior members managed a colony with the prime target of honey production.

Queen Rearing

A quiet year on this front. When our new apiary is operational we plan to develop this important area. Rearing good quality local queens is fundamental to maintaining vigorous colonies and rearing nucleus colonies for sale could be a lucrative fund raiser in years to come. Expect to see commercial rates for a nucleus colony topping £200 next spring.

Microscopy

We offered 'on the job' training at our bee clinics and some ad hoc tuition to those who asked. Given time and available tutors this is an area ripe for expansion. The division owns several microscopes and these are available to members. New borrowers will be given a briefing on their use.

Bee Health

Bee clinics were held at the beginning and end of the season. Many thanks to all the microscopists and helpers who made the days possible. We checked around 100 colonies from 24 apiaries. This year about 25% were positive for Nosema. This is about average for the last few years but it's a percentage we should be trying to reduce. We look to the governments Healthy Bees programme for some guidance here.

We held a **health tour** in May with our Seasonal Bee Inspector, David Rudland. 27 colonies were inspected in 13 apiaries over two days. Fortunately nothing dreadful was discovered although there was a lot of chalk brood, a case of black queen cell virus and it was clear that, once again, some members are somewhat 'optimistic' about their levels of varroa. Thanks David.

Our Regional Bee Inspector, Alan Byham led an **integrated pest management day** on 6th June, ably assisted by Seasonal Bee Inspectors David Rudland and Diane Steele. Box Hill School kindly provided three rooms for us to use and we are most grateful for their support. The event was open to the county and we were pleased to welcome 15 friends from five divisions. It would have been nice to see more of our members attending this event. Do make a note in your diary for 2010.

Shows

Many of you have turned out to help at shows throughout the season. These shows are very important, both as a public relations exercise for honeybees and as a rich source of potential new members (and an outlet for our honey!). We have been present at a great number of shows this year; at least 23 according to my count. We took part in the Apple Weekend at Polesden Lacey on 18th & 19th October 2008. This was our third year at the event and once again it was a great success, thanks to the efforts of over 20 members. The National Trust estimate that over 5,000 people came to the event. (We were also there this year but this report is to the end of September 2009)

Thanks to Mike Hill for coordinating our shows and to all who helped.

Meetings Programme

Our regular monthly meetings during the winter season at Woodhatch have been very popular and as usual, covered a wide variety of subjects. Many thanks to Paul Cleaver, our meetings secretary, for all his hard work. A full winter programme of meetings is arranged for the coming season including UK's only Professor of Apiculture, Francis Ratnieks from Sussex University – an eminent speaker on the international stage.

Our early season lunch at the Black Horse pub, Reigate, was well attended as usual. We ended the summer season with a party in the Mickleham Village Hall, opposite the apiary. This proved once again to be a very popular venue and nearly 50 people attended. The buffet was organised by Pauline and Robin Sparkes – thanks to you both.

Our summer 'socials' included a splendid barbeque to christen our new apiary at Henfold Lane – the first of many!

Extraction

For the third year we used our association extraction as a teaching exercise for our newer beekeepers. Tanya Demaine kindly allowed us to use her home. Celia Perry and Maggie Minter organised the event with superb efficiency. Thanks to all who helped them with moving supers and cleaning up. About 20 members were introduced to the different types of extractor and methods of uncapping and 190lbs of honey were extracted.

Swarm Control

This year our team received 195 swarm calls. 120 incidents were attended, 70 swarms were taken and 30 Reigate members, mostly beginners, received at least one swarm. The remainder went to our training apiaries, absconded before they could be collected or were simply too difficult to catch. Much of the load this year has fallen to Richard Woodhouse plus some amazing 'catches' by Paul Cleaver. Many of you will be aware that Eddie Webster was laid low with a chest infection this summer and was unable to play his usual key role. We are all delighted to see Eddie out and about again but we need to find new members willing to join the swarm team and take some of the pressure off the 'regulars'. It is a chance to educate, reassure and present beekeeping in a positive manner. It is a 'drop everything and come now' job and can be very time consuming but also very satisfying. No charge is made but donations to division funds this year have been considerable. Thanks to all of you for your efforts. See Richard's report for full details and please speak to Richard if you think you can help.

Farmers Market

Eddie Webster, Richard Woodhouse, Malcolm Broatch, Paul Cleaver, Brian Hamer, Cyril Humphries and other members have attended markets throughout the year have used the opportunity to publicise our division and activities.

Library

Paul Cleaver, in his role as librarian, has made a number of acquisitions. A book list was posted at Mickleham during the summer and can be seen on our new website. Paul has supplemented this with occasional reviews in the newsletter. Thanks Paul for all the hard work. We would like to build the library so that it becomes a first class resource for members. Please let Paul know if there is a book you would like to borrow or if you

would like to suggest a book we should purchase for the collection. The library is usually available at winter meetings – do make use of it. Because Paul has so many other commitments within RBKA, I am delighted to report that Richard Woodhouse has agreed to take on the role of librarian. If you thought that our library was a repository for out of date books that nobody wants to read, think again. We have been adding to the titles and there is a lot of good material available.

Premises

As you know, we are in the process of acquiring a piece of freehold land in Henfold Lane, south of Dorking, as a permanent training apiary for RBKA. We are currently working on plans for the infrastructure – storage, water, electricity, planting and eventually a club house (with a loo!). Because we belong to Surrey BKA, a registered charity and only SBKA has a legal identity, the land will most probably end up being held on our behalf by the Official Custodian of the Charity Commission. This will depend on votes taken at the Surrey BKA AGM in December.

A great deal of preliminary work has already been done on the site. Gates and fencing have been installed. A big thank you to all the members have assisted so far. Particular thanks to Kevin Arlove who has helped in many ways, particularly mowing and heavy lifting, John and Nathan Bartley who are working on the electrical supply and Tom Moremon and Colin Saunders who have helped us move a lot of heavy kit. Also, Pam Saunders and her planting group team who are working on a planting plan and to Jeff Essen for his help in drawing up the plans for the layout of the buildings.

Newsletter

Once again, Mike Hill and Audrey Gill have done a great job producing the newsletter each month. Thanks to all who have contributed articles and comment. As with all publications, the newsletter is hungry for content. If you would like to write a few words or submit an interesting picture, Mike and Audrey would be pleased to hear from you.

Website

Adam Leitch has been developing our website and it is now receiving a very large number of 'hits'. The address is www.reigatebeekeepers.org.uk Your articles and photographs would be welcomed whether you are a beginner or an 'old hand'. Well done Adam for all the hard work.

Surrey B.K.A.

It is apparent that some of our members are unclear about our relationship with Surrey BKA. SBKA is a registered charity and an 'Area Association Member' of the British Beekeepers Association. The 'hands on' beekeeping is carried out by eight divisions, each managed by its own committee. Reigate BKA is one of the eight divisions. Technically all our assets are owned by the charity but in practice each division has autonomy over day to day management. Any large projects require the approval of the trustees (who are ultimately liable if anything should go wrong). SBKA is managed by a Council comprising of a chairman, secretary, treasurer (all trustees of the charity) and in addition, each division provides a trustee and a divisional representative. This year I have been the Reigate trustee and Paul Cleaver has been our representative. When you pay your sub to join RBKA you also become a member of Surrey BKA and the British Beekeepers Association.

In conclusion

Reigate division has had another successful year, thanks to our growing and enthusiastic membership. We can always achieve more if members come forward to offer their time and expertise. If you have ideas or suggestions for next season, please tell a committee member. Actually, the division is brimming over with ideas. What we really need is volunteers to implement them. Could that be you? We were sorry to lose Tracy Collins from the committee due to pressure of work but delighted that she continues to make such a positive and greatly valued contribution to our activities. In her place we welcome Maggie Minter who will be formally voted onto the committee at our AGM.

Finally I would like to thank all the committee members who have given so much of their time and enthusiasm to make Reigate Division a success. In particular, I would like to thank Jacqui Essen for the seamless way she has taken over the role of secretary – we are in safe hands. Also, behind the scenes, Andrew Buchanan and Mike Hill have performed wonders streamlining our accounting and membership systems. Paul Cleaver has done a great job as our lead negotiator in the purchase of Henfold Lane and the eventual transfer to ownership by the charity and we have been very fortunate to have excellent legal advice and great support from Celia Perry. Thank you all. Enjoy your winter break and look forward to being part of a momentous year for RBKA in 2010 as we start a new era on our very own site.

Bob Maurer

9th November 2009