

Croydon Beekeepers' Assoc. Newsletter

A Division of Surrey
Beekeepers' Association

Founded 1879

Supplement

January 2017

Chairman's Chat

We've been talking in committee about how best to help beginners with their first steps in beekeeping.

My own first colony was a swarm from my local division's swarm collection scheme. I'd been to the winter classes, was going along once a week to their teaching apiary, and I felt ready. My new bees settled in fine, and a week after getting them I did my first inspection. All seemed ok, there were bees and comb; I didn't see any eggs, but was happy that either the queen wasn't yet laying, or that I couldn't see them. The situation was the same the following week, and also the week after that. By this point, I was wondering if things weren't quite right, and searched for an experienced beekeeper to come and have a look. Meanwhile ... and you've probably guessed the way this is going ... I found I did indeed have not only eggs, but several in the same cell, and even some sealed brood in an irregular bumpy pattern. So in my first year I learned about laying workers. An experienced eye could have spotted what was happening a lot earlier.

Beekeeping is so much better done with a companion, whether it's a 'bee buddy' or a mentor. The books say 'if this happens, do that' but real life is rarely so black and white. It's so helpful to have someone come over to have a look at your bees, perhaps ask a prompting question like "have you done a varroa count?", or just to listen as your friend runs through the options of what to do next. I think we could do well to partner mentors with beginners. Being a mentor doesn't just give the satisfaction of passing on one's knowledge, but also helps with your own - it's amazing what you can learn from the questions of a beginner. You don't need seven exam modules and an Advanced Husbandry Certificate, you just need enough experience to be confident in your own beekeeping.

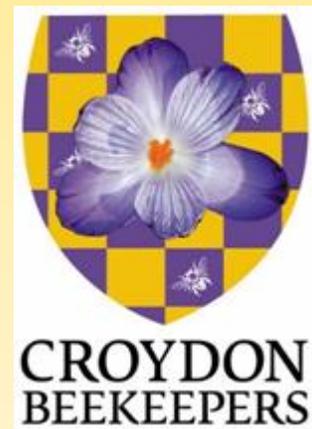
If you'd like to be a mentor (or indeed a mentoree), please let me know, and I'll do my best to match people up.

Chairman: Bob Barnes

Secretary: Joyce Atkinson

Treasurer: Tamar Devane

Editor: Derek Read



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In general the committee needs more people to help make things happen and if you are wondering about possibly becoming more involved, please do email me:

chair@croydonbeekeepers.org.uk or phone 01883 343 363 for a chat.

Surrey Beekeepers Association AGM

Surrey Beekeepers' Association (SBKA) is the legal entity and charity of which Croydon BKA and the other seven divisions are a part. It is the mechanism by which we are represented to the national body, the BBKA; it organises events such as the Surrey Bee Day (18th February 2017). All Croydon BKA members are in turn Surrey Beekeepers.

It was good to see Croydon very well represented at the SBKA AGM on 26th November . We are one of the smaller divisions within the county but contribute strongly. Mark Stott is chair of the Surrey Education Committee, and Derek Read is one of the charity's trustees. At the meeting there was the usual AGM business of reports from various people. Surrey chairman Bob Maurer paid tribute to Croydon's out-going chairman Mark Stott, highlighting how much Mark's leadership has brought our division forward.

There was also recognition for all the work that Sandra Rickwood has done for Surrey BKA during her twelve years as Secretary. If you've been to one of the Surrey events you'll certainly have come across Sandra: she's



always helpful and cheerful. To mark Sandra's "retirement" there was sparkling wine and cake in the shape of honeycomb decorated with bees (of course).

Finally there was a very interesting talk by James Makinson who is working on a post doctorate at the Bee Sensory and Behavioural Ecology laboratory at Queen Mary College, University of London. His project looks at the flight patterns of bumble bees and honey bees by gluing tiny little aerials onto them and tracking them with radar. Each aerial weighs 15mg so the weight doesn't hamper the bees, but the researchers do have to space their frames very widely and clear out the resulting brace comb once a day. We were hoping James was going to reveal all the secrets of drone congregation areas, but his work is still in its early stages and there is more work to do. He did show some really interesting plots of how the bees initially explore to find the best forage by flying loops, and then exploit a single find with efficient direct flights.

At the end there was time for sandwiches and more chat with fellow beekeepers. So overall an enjoyable afternoon and apparently..... **next year it is Croydon's turn to host!**