

Chairman's Summer Newsletter.

Dear All,

I thought I should update you all on the latest position re our Association's , new apiary and beekeeping locally in general.

Obviously this has been a very frustrating year for the association and in particular the new beekeepers amongst us who have been looking to get started or, almost worse still, have acquired their bees and are wondering what the heck to do now!!!

For those beginners who attended our beginners' course earlier this year or even last year, I'm so sorry that you find yourself a bit in limbo. We had hoped to meet up with you again at our apiary, to go through the hives and give real "hands on" experience. With the need for social distancing and close examination and explanation of what was happening in the hives and on the frames, that has just not been practical. Do not give up however! As we have said at our beginners course, we are always willing to help with friendly advice when wanted (often indeed when not wanted!). If you already have bees and are wondering what on earth they are up to, we can always be contacted for advice and if necessary, come round to assist. If you phone either Emma or myself we can arrange this. I know that some of you have already identified a mentor and that this is proving useful.

I am unable to say at this time when our winter meetings will start – normally from the last Friday in September but will let you know as soon as possible. Much will depend on the availability of a venue and the need to adequately self distance.

As far as the new apiary at Heathlands is concerned, the clubhouse is now complete and looking good. Under normal circumstances we would have already moved our hives to the site, leaving Walby as an "out apiary" for housing swarms etc and storing much of our equipment. It seems sensible however to concentrate the rest of the year on developing Heathlands by planting the new hedge, laying some slabs and eradicating as much of the weeds/nettles as possible. It is very pleasing to see the amount of wild flowers close to the site and the bean crop which the local farmer has planted in the adjacent field, which will provide much needed forage at this time of year.

We do not intend to clutter the new clubhouse with equipment so that there is plenty of space for us to meet and instead are looking to store a small amount of equipment in what will become the refurbished bird hide on the site. This will require some DIY work which again we can take forward over the next few months.

As far as beekeeping is concerned, hopefully you will have seen the advice that was circulated regarding the necessity to feed the bees if stores are in short supply. Although the June gap has now passed, unless the weather improves there may be little scope for bees to go out and about to forage. Do bear this in mind and keep checking.

I'm receiving very mixed messages about the beekeeping year locally to date. A number feel they are having a very good season with an equal number reporting the loss of queens, late building of colonies and resultant loss of honey production.

Initially there were very few swarms around, with a few reported and collected towards the end of June once the month's own "weather lock down" lifted. Accordingly we have been able to help only a few beginners to get started by way of a swarm but do keep letting either Emma or myself know of your position and we will try to help if at all possible.

I have little to add at this time I believe but will try to update you again if the position re lock down changes and we are ready to resume a more active Association calendar.

Kind regards

Robin