

Apiary Custodians' Report 2016

We started the year off well with thirteen colonies making it through the winter with no losses, made up of the following:-

Two 14 x 12's,
Six on National Deeps,
One using the Peter Street method of National Shallow frames for the brood,
One Warre hive
One Top bar hive
Two Nucs, one in a national deep, the other overwintered successfully in a polystyrene Nuc box.

We had a very good turn out for the annual apiary cleaning day, with old and new members attending and helping clean and sort equipment for the coming season. Being able to use the container for storage and holding spares and coffee/tea making is a marvellous advantage and a great thanks must go again to Pippa for the loan of the container.

All went well, with most colonies making up well, except No 3, the Top bar and the Warre Hives.

Disaster struck on our Health Check day in May. Debbie Burton the SBI, had been working down through the colonies from the higher numbers, and with only 2 to go she found No 3 with EFB!! Total site shutdown.

Debbie put the outbreak down to No 3 being a small colony under stress. Due to the susceptibility of other small colonies in the apiary, it was recommended by the SBI to knock down the Top Bar and Warre hives to be on the safe side. It's a very sad sight the destruction of a living colony of bees. I hope that none of you have to experience the same sights and smells, but it had to be done for the sake of the other colonies.

With delays due to sickness we were finally cleared, 12 weeks after the shutdown. We managed to recover some of the full supers that were waiting for clearance, holding a very well attended evening of de-capping and spinning frames at the community centre. With that evening and a later spinning of full supers we harvested a total of 136 lbs of honey, all being sold at the various educational displays we presented.

The number of members attending the apiary never recovered after EFB, with the final few weeks down to only 4 or 5. Lets hope next year this trend will be reversed.

We ended the year with 9 colonies and 2 Nucs which had been used for the Observation hive at the few late shows that we attended, namely The Secrets of the Heath at Petersfield Heath and Blackmoor Apple Day.

I would like to thank everybody who helped out with looking after groups at the Apiary, especially Liz, Mel, Rowan and Pippa, for their dedication turning up most Sundays, come rain or shine and the support that they gave me. I wish every success to Graham Rowden and Rowan Roberts who are joining the team.

This was my final year as Apiary Custodian, a job I really enjoyed, learning a great deal from others and getting involved in the running of the association's Apiary. It's a

position I would recommend to others wanting to learn the ins and outs of beekeeping, the
Highs and the Lows.

Richard Williams, Retiring Apiary Custodian