

## **Apiary Custodians Report 2017**

The 2017 season started off relatively well, with eight out of nine over-wintered colonies surviving. The only casualty was the 'Peter Street' method hive, which used super frames instead of deeps. The colony was not thought to have been strong enough to survive.

Following the introductory training sessions in February, new beekeepers were offered the opportunity to site their hives at the association apiary for the first season. Colonies could be developed from apiary nucs and practical advice given by other members and custodians. This proved popular and a number of new beekeepers successfully developed their colonies before taking them home at the end of the season.

Mid-week (Wednesday) sessions were introduced, allowing members who could not attend Sunday sessions to attend.

One of the association colonies was set aside for queen-rearing, offering both new and more experienced beekeepers the opportunity to learn new skills. Unfortunately this didn't prove successful but will be taken forward again next year.

The association colonies generally progressed well during the year, with one aggressive colony (no. 7) re-queened. An extraction day was held in August, with 80 lbs of honey extracted.

The observation hive was taken to a number of shows, including Fernhurst, South Harting, Rogate, Petersfield's 'Secrets of the Heath', Tichborne and Blackmoor Apple Day. Sales of association honey proved very successful. To increase supply two colonies will be set aside for honey production in 2018.

The final meeting was held in early October, with acetic acid treatment on appropriate hive parts.

Liz Hawes stepped down from her role as apiary custodian at the end of the season, following the end of her three-year tenure. Liz's help has been invaluable and she will be very much missed by her fellow custodians and other members. Peter Reader has kindly offered to take over her role.

The custodians (Graham, Rowan, Peter and Mel) are always happy to listen to any suggestions on how the apiary sessions could be improved so please feel free to speak to any of us at the Sunday meetings.'

**Mel Espin, Custodian**