



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

MEETING REPORT

Happy New Year everyone! We had a very enjoyable Christmas event at "the Foundry" brewpub in December. I can do no better than quote some of the comments from our [web-](#)

[forum](#): "What a lovely social evening yesterday.

Great venue at The Foundry, fascinating 'tour', delicious food, lush beer brewed on site – but most of all, the fab

company! Nice to meet a few of you, thanks for making us feel so welcome"

"and kudos to David Cockburn, who can now write on his CV – 'able to organise a P**s-up in a brewery!!' "

Well done to David for picking a great venue, and as Dougal pointed out, we don't necessarily need to have the formality of a meeting to gather there on

occasion, for a good glass of beer.

You'll have seen from the last newsletter that the committee have made some considerable progress with the schedule for 2013. As in recent years, we've chosen not to organize a meeting in January, but we are looking

forward to a talk by Bob Smith in February.

We should all be thinking about our goals for beekeeping in 2013 – whether it's simply a better honey harvest (can't be worse than this year, can it?),

practising some new skills – such as queen rearing, or just doing a better job of swarm control.

If you want to put some structure to your winter beekeeping reading, then you could take a look at the syllabus for the BBKA basic beekeeping certificate – we'll be organizing some sessions to help prepare interested members.

Adrian

No Meeting in January

Next Meeting
QUEEN REARING

With Bob Smith
Wed 6th February
7.30pm

Whitefriars
Management Suite

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The easiest way to contact us is via the website, but you can also e-mail

cantbees@gmail.com

Contact Newsletter editor to contribute articles

JANUARY 2013

A newsletter for friends and members of Canterbury BKA

APIARY NOTES

January

With the wind and rain we've been having over Christmas, it's important to check that hives have not been damaged and that mouse guards are still in place. Bees can cope with cold provided they are healthy, dry and have plenty of good quality food. Poor health, damp and shortage of stores are the enemy. Do check levels of food stored since I have noticed that one of my hives is getting a little light. Feeding options are candy/fondant; some people use a kilo bag of sugar with a 2cm hole made in one side, water added until all moistened and then inverted over the hole in the coverboard. Once you start feeding you should continue to do so. The web-forum is the place to find out about sources of bakers' fondant.



Check the level of varroa, especially if counts before the autumn treatments were high. If the natural drop rate count is 3 or more a day treat with oxalic or lactic acid in January. It's the perfect time to treat with oxalic acid given the cold weather, as most colonies should be broodless.

Adrian

DATES FOR DIARY

6 th February 2013	Indoor meeting, Whitefriars. Bob Smith of Medway BKA discusses queen rearing
3 rd February 2013	BBKA Module 1,2,3,6,8 Examinations, applications must be with Angela Merritt
6 th March 2013	Indoor meeting, Whitefriars
23 rd March 2013	BBKA Module 1,2,3,6,8 Examinations
6 th April 2013	Outdoor meeting, Westbere Apiary
12- 14 April 2013	BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams University College, Newport. <i>The national beekeepers' event</i>
20-21 July 2013	Brogdale Cherry Festival
24-25 August 2013	Brogdale Cider Festival
19-20 October 2013	Brogdale Apple Festival

WEB-FORUM

Count those varroa!

Whilst winter is traditionally a quiet period for beekeeping, there's still the occasional task to undertake – whether checking that the hives are still upright, buying equipment in winter sales, or undertaking some study to get ready for Spring. The [webforum](#) is a good place to keep a dialogue going. For example, if you are planning an oxalic acid treatment soon, we can see who gets the “best” mite fall! Whilst David C was leading in the varroa termination stakes in August/September, others will no doubt vie for the best kill-rates. Editor's tip: if you have a big mite-kill, and want to count them, it can be easier to take a photo and count them in a photo-editing programme, such as Photoshop.

[Quick link](#) to CBKA web forum

Adrian

MENTORSHIP

2013 plans

With a view to building on past success, for 2013 your committee has resolved to put mentoring on a more extensive and formal basis than has been the practice in our club in the past. With this in mind we intend to set up a series of 'cells', small geographically distinct groups of people, each centered round an experienced leader. The group will include some at an intermediate level, needing help to move to the next level, but able to offer support to beginners, as well as beginners needing mentoring to learn the practice of the craft.

KSRC COURSES

2013 Programme

Bob Smith, Julie Coleman and Adrian Davis are continuing the Beekeepers @ KSRC initiative in 2013, to provide training to more advanced beekeepers in Kent. Following the success trialling of the [KSRC shop](#) on the CBKA website, we've now invested in a dedicated site – but you can still access this from the menu-bar of the CBKA site.

During 2012, 16 courses were offered at KSRC Sittingbourne and more than 300 places were taken up by beekeepers from all over the

county. Every one of the 16 Kent associations was represented.

With this plan in mind, could you please write an email to me before the end of January putting the word 'Mentoring' in the subject line. In the text of your mail I will need your location and post code, any comment, some indication of your priority objectives from mentoring and your typical availability during the season. If you keep bees I also need to know the number of hives and the number of years you have been beekeeping, otherwise please just state that you are a beginner.

David Cockburn

This year, our aim will be to provide 2nd level and more advanced courses for beekeepers who have had bees for a few years. The programme includes courses aimed at supporting those putting themselves up for the important BBKA Basic Assessment and BBKA General Husbandry practicals. Additionally,

rather than the rather random collection of courses on aspects of microscopy in beekeeping this year, in 2013 the plan is to offer a staged series of possibly 5 different

If you want to be part of our mentoring programme – as lead or participant – then please use link below to contact David Cockburn, who will be coordinating the establishment of the groups

[reply email about mentorship](#)

courses from an introduction through to anatomy and dissection and pollen analysis. Some of the popular courses are to be repeated and some frequently requested courses are to be added in 2013.

All in all, we hope that there will be something for all second-level beekeepers as they strive to improve their knowledge and skills.

[Quick link](#) to KSRC website

Bob Smith
Medway BKA

BEE-BROOD FOR BREAKFAST?

My family and I were hooked by the BBC2 "fly-on-the-wall" documentary about Claridge's Hotel, in December. The episode that got my children really talking was based around the temporary pop-up of the "Noma" restaurant chefs during the Olympic fortnight, and their challenges in getting fresh wood-ants to serve in their salads! Noma is currently acknowledged as the best place to eat in the world, and specialises in food foraged from the woodlands of Denmark, near its Copenhagen base.



My interest was therefore piqued when I read that they are exploring how to make granola from bee-larvae. Putting aside the immediate question of "why would you want to?", it's really interesting to see their thought processes described in the blog "[Nordic Food Lab](#)". A particular challenge is how to separate the larvae from the wax - they seem to be favouring freezing in liquid nitrogen and subsequent manual separation - so you know that this is not going to be priced to compete with "Rice Krispies"!



The article did remind me of the times I have counted varroa loads in my hive by culling drone brood, freezing, and then manually working through the frozen block to find varroa. It's easy when the block is properly frozen, but the larvae shatter easily. As they warm up, the job gets messier and messier. But at least now I have another use for the dronecomb, once I've counted varroa (?!)

You might be wondering what bee granola tastes like. According to the super-chefs, "the flavour is something of egg and honey, and warm honeydew melon. They are fatty on the tongue and deeply savoury with a lingering sweetness." Apparently as the pupae mature, the flavour becomes less special.

Of course, all sorts of mammals, including bears, honey badgers and humans have known this for many thousands of years. It's curious that in the 21st century, culinary thought-leaders are re-learning what our aboriginal ancestors must have known to be a top-quality, nutritionally-rich occasional meal.

[Quick-link](#) to Nordic Food Lab blog

Adrian

BEST PRACTICE GUIDELINES

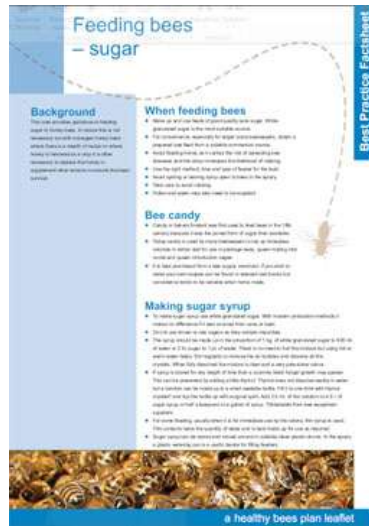
Free information from FERA

Beginning in 2010, the National Bee Unit has been producing a series of best practice guidelines which cover the essentials of beekeeping. In August 2012, the most recent guidelines were published - [3 articles](#) covering feeding bees with sugar, pollen and water, and a short summary on managing varroa in colonies.



Earlier guidelines (there are 11 in total) cover Spring Checks, handling and examining bees, as well as disease/pest recognition, and bee improvement through breeding.

These are an excellent free resource, funded in part by the "Healthy Bee Plan" initiative. The guidelines are short - generally not much more than a single page of text, so are nice to have as quick reference guides. Whether you are a beginner, or more experienced, these offer a good distillation of the beekeeping husbandry that we should all be practising.



On the same website, you will also find electronic versions of the advisory leaflets ("managing varroa", "foulbrood diseases" etc).

These are extremely thorough descriptive booklets, and being substantial in length are perhaps better sourced from the NBU in printed format e.g. from their stands at shows such as the Spring Convention, or National Honey Show.

And for completeness, I ought also to mention the NBU factsheets, which focus on individual husbandry tasks - such as comb replacement, or making an artificial swarm. Whilst you browse the NBU BeeBase website, you should also take the opportunity to register your apiary with the inspectors - by doing so, you will be alerted about any disease outbreaks in your immediate vicinity, and will help the beekeeping community to understand better the colony density in Kent.

[Quick link](#) to BeeBase best practice guidelines.

Adrian

BBKA BUSINESS



The British Beekeepers Association

The annual delegates meeting (ADM) of the BBKA happens on 12th January 2013. Much work is undertaken by the BBKA executive committee, although the complexities of running an organisation for over 24,000 beekeepers is often difficult to see.

This [link](#) will give you quick access to the documentation prepared for this meeting where the executive committee are held to account by the county associations. Julian, as our KBKA representative, has given the Kent representatives thoughts on

where BBKA is doing well, or could improve – the national swarm collection coordination site being a particular hot-topic, and something that isn't universally welcomed.

quicklink for [BBKA ADM](#)

NEWS FROM KBKA

David Wood, vice-chairman of KBKA recently [posted](#) details of the recent EU report on bees and neonicotinoids. This is a controversial topic debated in both national and European parliaments.

As beekeepers, we should be looking out for (all) bees, hopefully using rational debate. The link below takes you to David's KBKA webpage, from which you can download the full EU report.

[Quick link](#) to neo-nic report

