



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITOR'S NOTES

A Happy New Year to everyone! Here's hoping that the coming year gives us good weather for bees and beekeeping – and that we get rid of this mild, wet and windy weather soon!

January is a good time to make plans for the season,

and the equipment retailers are currently tempting us to buy in anticipation of a good year (see p6). What do you need to work on this year? Improving your husbandry, understanding diseases better, maybe

producing honey or wax for family or show? Now's the time to make a resolution to do something different – and better – when you are in your apiary this year. If you are looking to extend your beekeeping range, then there are some opportunities mentioned on p3.

Don't forget to manage your varroa with a winter

treatment – most usually oxalic acid. Your local mentor group can help, if you aren't confident of what to do (p4).

We have just about sorted out a winter programme for the association, to start in February – one date to be confirmed, but hopefully the speakers will spark your

interest (p2). Your committee tries to encourage learning and sharing of knowledge throughout the year – so even if you are not interested in examinations, take an hour or two to

watch some videos about beekeeping (see p 5), or track activities at KSRC (p6).

Finally, I'm intrigued to see what winter flowers our bees visit. I saw a queen bumble feeding on a Fatsia umbel on New Year's Eve, and Viburnum tinus is also flowering. Report any bee visits to flowers on our forum ([link](#))! Adrian

Next Meeting

BEE – FARMING

NICK MENGHAM

Whitefriars conference

room, Canterbury

Wed 5th February

7.30-9.30pm

Joining instructions

– see page 2

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you can also e-mail

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Contact Newsletter editor

to contribute articles

JANUARY 2014

DATES FOR DIARY

11 January 2014	54 th Annual Delegates' Meeting, BBKA, The Chesford Grange, Chesford Bridge, Kenilworth CV8 2LD
3 February 2014	Last day to send off BBKA exams application to A Merritt
5 th February 2014	Branch meeting, 7.30pm, Whitefriars management suite. Talk by Nick Mengham on bee-farming
21 February 2014	Last day to send off BBKA Gen/Adv husbandry assessment application to Angela Merritt
1 st March 2014	Bee trade exhibition (link) Warwick and Stareton Hall, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire, CV8 2LG
5 th March 2014	Branch meeting, 7.30pm, Whitefriars management suite. Talk by Prof David Evans (U of Warwick), date to be confirmed
22 nd March 2014	BBKA examinations, Lynsted Junior School
2 nd April 2014	Branch meeting, 7.30pm, Whitefriars management suite. Julian Audsley, Joan McAllister, Adrian Davis Basics of queen rearing
4-6 April 2014	BBKA Spring Convention (link) Harper Adams University Newport, Shropshire TF10 8NB

DIRECTIONS

Whitefriars Conference room Canterbury

Free parking in the multi-storey car park. Collect your ticket and this will be processed during the meeting. Park on the 1st floor on the left and take the corridor down to the management suite at the bottom of the corridor on the left. Please car share if you can, since Whitefriars have to pay the cost of this on our behalf.

By car Set Sat Nav post code to CT1 2TF

Go around the ring road and at the roundabout opposite the Police Station turn through the city walls into Watling Street. Go past the bus station on your right and the Whitefriars multi-storey car park is straight ahead and right at the mini-roundabout. If coming from the south go down the Old Dover Rd and straight across the roundabout through the city walls.

By foot / BUS

Between the Bus Station and Whitefriars center there is an alleyway between Boots and Next. Here there is an entrance to the car park. Go to the first floor by lift and turn left out of the lift through double doors. The management suite is 20 yds along this corridor.

NEW REGIONAL BEE INSPECTOR



As reported in the last newsletter, Alan Byham has now retired as the South-East Regional Bee Inspector (RBI). His replacement has now been appointed – it is **Julian Parker**, who has been a seasonal bee inspector (SBI) in Buckinghamshire and East Berkshire for several years. His contact details are:

Email julian.parker@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone 07775 119469

Whilst our principal summertime contact continues to be our local SBI, Michael Cooper, it's good to see that the National Bee Unit is maintaining its staffing levels in a time of significant financial squeeze on all government departments. The RBI co-ordinates apiary inspections and a training programme for the region under the management of the National Bee Inspector (Andy Wattam) and the Head of the National Bee Unit (Mike Brown). The NBI and RBIs are employed full time throughout the year; with SBIs employed during the beekeeping season.

WINTER FEEDING

Advice from NBU

Beekeepers should remain vigilant throughout the winter and check the weight of their colonies. The mild weather conditions may have caused some colonies to remain quite active, consuming more winter stores than usual. As a result, there may be a risk that colonies will be running low on food stocks and so should be fed with bakers fondant (2.5kg/ colony). Wrap the fondant in plastic film (alternatively, mini plastic bags used to store loose fruit from the supermarket are perfectly acceptable and cost nothing). Monitor them every 2 weeks to see how much is consumed, feeding more fondant if needed. Make a hole in one side of the plastic and place over the feed-hole on the crown board, turning the crown board round if necessary so that the fondant is above the cluster.

For more information please refer to Best Practice Guideline Number 7 – 'Feeding Bees - Sugar' and check the emergency feeding section. The leaflet can be found from the following link:

<https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/downloadNews.cfm?id=121>

LOOKING FOR A NEW APIARY?

Landowners seeking beekeepers

I've been contacted by two different orchard owners, both based on the outskirts of Canterbury (Nackington, Bekesbourne), who were enquiring whether anyone would be interested to keep bees on their land. In one case, the farmer was interested in pollination of cherry and pear trees, so would require 10-14 hives in April. As this would be to replace importation of bumblebees, there's some time pressure to sort this out before end of January. The other enquiry was a more straightforward case of putting hives on a 2 acre plot. Please contact Adrian at cantbees@gmail.com if you want to discuss further, or be put in contact with these landowners.



Adrian

OXALIC ACID SAFARIS

Mentor Group Support

We encourage all members to practice integrated pest management for the control of varroa in your hives. Late December or early January is the ideal time to use the "OA trickle method", as there is little or no brood in the hive, so all varroa will be phoretic, and vulnerable to oxalic acid. Oxalic acid treatment is particularly important if you've used Apistan or Bayvarol in the hive previously, it is simple and doesn't bother the bees at this time of year but you do need to get the formulation right and it doesn't keep once mixed.



Some of the groups have already met to apply OA (by both trickle and evaporation methods), but given the mild weather we've had throughout December and early January, it wouldn't be a surprise if some colonies still have brood. You will have to judge whether your colony is in a quiescent state, particularly if you keep your bees in a heavily insulated box.

If you are not yet participating in the mentor groups or perhaps are a beginner and would like to have an early opportunity to see inside a beehive, here's a list of the areas covered, and the group leaders. Email cantbees@gmail.com to be put in contact:

Canterbury/Faversham	Chris Bailes/Dave Cockburn
Deal	Adrian Davis
Herne	Michael Roberts
Folkestone/Ashford	Dougal Hendry
Womenswold	Julian Audsley/Joan McAllister

Dave Cockburn

STUDY GROUPS

Preparation for BBKA modules

We have a small group of folks who are working towards the next examination sitting in March. Now that Christmas has passed, you should be thinking about a study plan! Whilst the objective should be learning, rather than simply passing an exam, Adrian and Julian will be happy to review your model answers to see if they can be improved. If you are interested to know more, or perhaps are thinking of studying for a module, please contact Julian or Adrian. The areas of study are:

- Module 1 - Honey bee Management
- Module 2 - Honey bee Products and Forage
- Module 3 - Honey bee Pests, Diseases and Poisoning
- Module 5 - Honey bee Biology
- Module 6 - Honey bee Behaviour
- Module 7 - Selection & Breeding of Honey bees
- Module 8 - Honey bee Management, Health and History

KBKA exams secretary
Mrs A. Merritt
49 Townley Rd.
Bexleyheath,
Kent DA6 7HY

More details of the syllabus for each paper can be found at [this link](#). You'll need to submit applications to sit the examination to Angela Merritt of KBKA by 3rd February, to ensure she gets you registered. The actual examination(s) will be on 22nd March. If you are interested in doing the Basic Certificate in apiculture, we'll arrange that with KBKA in the Spring; if you are considering the General Husbandry or Advanced Husbandry assessments, applications need to be with Angela by 21st February.

Adrian

LEARNING WITHOUT STUDYING

Videos for dark winter nights

Of course, not everyone is keen to undertake a formal study programme in their spare time. However, should you want to broaden your beekeeping horizons, there is a huge amount of good quality, free material available on the web.

The National Honey Show got funding to put several of the lectures from the October 2013 show online, and several more are to follow:

<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/lectures.shtml>

These are high quality talks of 40-50mins, which can be streamed from youtube directly. Mike Palmer's videos are probably the ones to go for first. Don't judge the videos by the guy's hillbilly appearance – he's a good speaker with sensible strategies for husbandry. Robert Paxton, being a professor in Germany, is more academic, but still accessible.



Eric Tournet is a French photographer who styles himself as the "ultimate bee photographer". He has produced a number of books with spectacularly beautiful images of bees and their keepers. I recommend his coffee-table book "Le peuple des abeilles" just for the photographs, even if - like me - you don't speak a word of French. Better still, his online videos are free – and cover a diverse range of topics such as honey-hunting by "untouchables" in India, the honey tribes of Ethiopia, and the largest honey festival in the world, in Yunnan province, China. The images he produces pretty much speak for themselves.

<http://vimeo.com/user3607106>

http://www.thehoneygatherers.com/html/index_en.html

"More than Honey" is a film by Swiss cinematographer Markus Imhoof. It's a technical tour de force for its in-hive video, as well as actual footage of queen mating on the wing. It contrasts traditional high Alpine beekeeping with the industrialised process of North American commercial practice, as well as looking at what happens when bees are eliminated – in some Chinese orchards. Some of the footage is heart-breaking, at least from the perspective of a hobby beekeeper in the UK. But there is a positive outlook as well. For the moment, you'll have to order this DVD from your favourite online retailer, if the trailer impresses you.

<http://buy.morethanhoneyfilm.com/>



The British Beekeepers Association

BBKA BUSINESS

Annual Delegates Meeting

You can now see the papers associated with this meeting on 11th January on the BBKA website – follow [this link](#) (you'll need your BBKA membership details). BBKA News will undoubtedly write up the meeting, and I will try to complement their reportage.

WINTER SALES

Need another hive?

Hopefully you will all have got emails, or seen adverts regarding the traditional mid-winter sales from some of the major beekeeping equipment suppliers. Of course, the main event is often considered to be the Thornes sale, which runs through January (starting on 4th January). Other suppliers are available! Rather than list the suppliers directly, I'll refer you to what I thought was a nice "review" in the *Daily Telegraph* of the best beehives. It lists the main suppliers of wood, plastic and "unconventional" beehive designs, but in a nice photo-gallery. From the gallery you can quickly get to Modern Beekeeping, National Bee Supplies and other companies:

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/beekeeping/10349769/The-best-beehives-and-houses.html>

Our local supplier, Patrick Murfet ([link](#)), is offering some of the Thornes deals – so if you have a small order, you can save yourself P&P by dropping into his shop outside Bridge. The only thing I noticed that might be of special interest is his "queen trapping cage" – which is not available from the Thornes website. This was designed for varroa control without chemicals, but can also be usefully deployed for the "Dutch method" of queen rearing. In January, he's got it for £27.50 instead of the usual £39.50.



The next big sale event is a new Bee Trade Exhibition, on 2nd March, at Stoneleigh. This is a significant development as it is separate from the BBKA Spring Convention. It will be interesting to see how it gets on – and how it affects the Spring Convention in early April. Weblinks for both:

Bee trade exhibition: <http://www.beetradex.co.uk/>

BBKA spring convention: http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention_2014

BEEKEEPERS @ KSRC

Courses in 2014



Beekeepers @ KSRC is now in its 3rd year and its prime purpose remains essentially the same – to provide training and education opportunities for "Improver Beekeepers" from any of the 16 Kent Associations and Branches. Novice beekeepers are best taught and mentored in their local associations but this makes it hard for local groups also to provide in-depth training for a relatively few Improver members; we hope in part to address that gap.

All of the classroom and laboratory-based courses are delivered in the excellent facilities available at KSRC (Kent Science Resource Centre) near Sittingbourne, a location that is reasonably central for all of Kent. During 2014, we plan to offer some of the titles run in previous years as well as some new offerings; some dates are now firm and will be bookable from the website while others are still under discussion and will be included on the site in the coming weeks – bookmark and keep watching the website! www.ksrcbees.org.uk

One exciting new initiative this year will be the first practical training courses that we have been able to offer. This course will only be available to holders of the BBKA Basic Certificate, it will involve a full day of tutored apiary work concentrating on aspects of reading the bees, pro-active management of them and on smooth, confident handling. I am pleased to be able to say that two of our bee-farmer colleagues have agreed, enthusiastically, to the use of their apiaries for this training so we will be able to offer two locations, at either end of the County.

Final details to be arranged, this should be on offer from late April.

Bob Smith, Julie Coleman and Adrian Davis