

# CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

## EDITOR'S NOTES

We are now at the most difficult time of year for a colony. Most of the bees present in the hive will have developed from eggs laid in September and October. "Winter bees" have a 4-6 month lifetime, in contrast to the 6 weeks of a summer worker, so even if the colony was well fed (with pollen) in autumn, the winter bees are reaching the end of their natural lifespan. The colony works to replace bees by increasing the egg-laying rate of the queen through February and March. It will take 15-20 full loads of pollen (each ~8mg) to raise one egg to an adult bee, so flowering trees and plants close by will enable the bees to collect pollen quickly between the rain showers. Note that an egg laid on 1<sup>st</sup> March will not become a foraging bee until about 12<sup>th</sup> April, so colonies will often not substantially increase their population until late-April,

typically the time when oil seed rape is beginning to flower.

Of course, this season's OSR will be the first British crop produced since the ban on neonicotinoid seed dressings, which are commonly used for OSR. Prof Dave Goulson has written some interesting essays recently relating to the

pressures on farmers to use up to 20 different chemical treatments on crops. His blogs make interesting reading – but are too long to reproduce in a newsletter, so I'll confine myself to advertising their

titles and web addresses – "Crop yields higher than ever without neonics" (in EU), and "Biodiversity v Intensive Farming; Has Farming Lost its Way?" Both can be found at [this website](#).

Lastly, we hope to see you on Wednesday for a show-and-tell event relating to microscopy and disease (see p3 for more details). Adrian

### Next Meeting

#### **Microscopy and Disease**

Whitefriars

Management Suite

**Wednesday 4th**

**March**

**7.30-9.30pm**

Joining instructions

– see page 2

## CBKA OFFICERS

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[cantbees@gmail.com](mailto:cantbees@gmail.com)

Contact Newsletter editor to contribute articles

**MARCH 2015**

## DATES FOR DIARY

<b>4 March</b>	<b>“Microscopy and Disease” branch meeting, 7.30-9.30pm, in Whitefriars Management Suite, Canterbury CT1 2TF with Jan and Adrian</b>
7 March	Bee Trade Exhibition, Stoneleigh Park, Warks
16 March	Committee meeting, 7pm, The Old Gate Inn, 162 Dover New Road, Canterbury CT1 3EL
21 March	BBKA module examination day
<b>11 April</b>	<b>First Apiary meeting of the season, location tbc</b>
11 April	Central Association of Beekeepers lectures and AGM, Lambeth SE11 6DN
17-19 April	BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams University College, Newport, Shropshire
10 May	Yalding & District Honey Bee Fayre & Auction

## 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.





## MICROSCOPY AND DISEASE MEETING

Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> March

On Wednesday 4 March we welcome the membership to the Whitefriars conference room for a microscopy session. The idea is to show you how microscopy can inform and educate beekeepers, and we give examples of disease diagnosis (especially nosema), as well as the principles of pollen analysis and basic anatomy. There will be a chance to have a go with some microscopes, but please don't bring any bees, as we won't have the time or space to run a nosema clinic. If you could email [cantbees@gmail.com](mailto:cantbees@gmail.com) if you are coming, just so that we can guesstimate the number of attendees.

Adrian and Jan Soetaert

## SHOP AT WAITROSE

It'll be good for CBKA!

Waitrose have a scheme within each store that donates £1000 per month to 3 local charities that have applied to them for funding. The applicant has to write a short article on why they should be chosen and what local benefit there would be. Michael Roberts – on our behalf - applied at Christmas, thinking that the Spring would be the right time to target; in the application he highlighted our work in the community and in schools. Shoppers in **Waitrose Canterbury** will earn tokens, dependent on the amount they spend, which they can then put into a collecting box that shows the three charity options. The resulting accumulation of tokens by each charity will determine the percentage division of the £1000. We are in the March pool of charities and the amount donated will come to us sometime in April. Thus for those who habitually shop in Waitrose, plan to stock up in March. For the rest of us – try out Waitrose and help CBKA raise funds (for our new apiary in Bekesbourne). The scheme is intentionally community driven, so please ask all your friends and neighbours to support us – and maybe switch supermarket allegiance, if only for a few weeks!

Michael Roberts



## BAILEY COMB CHANGE

Spring Cleaning for a Hive

If you've been keeping bees for a year or more, you will notice that the frames in the broodbox will be looking distinctly black and shabby, unlike the fresh white comb you have in your supers. As well as being unsightly, the old comb can be a sump for the causative organisms of nosema, chalkbrood and the foul broods. The National Bee Unit recommends that we change one-third of the brood frames every year. Complete change is also a good option - it may be more expensive in time and brood foundation, but the extra expense normally pays for itself in stronger, healthier colonies and more honey. There is no approved medicine to control nosema (or other diseases aside from varroosis), so comb change is your best insurance to keep the bees healthy.

There are two methods of doing a complete change - the Bailey Comb Change and the Shook Swarm. The more commonly used method is the Bailey Comb Change.

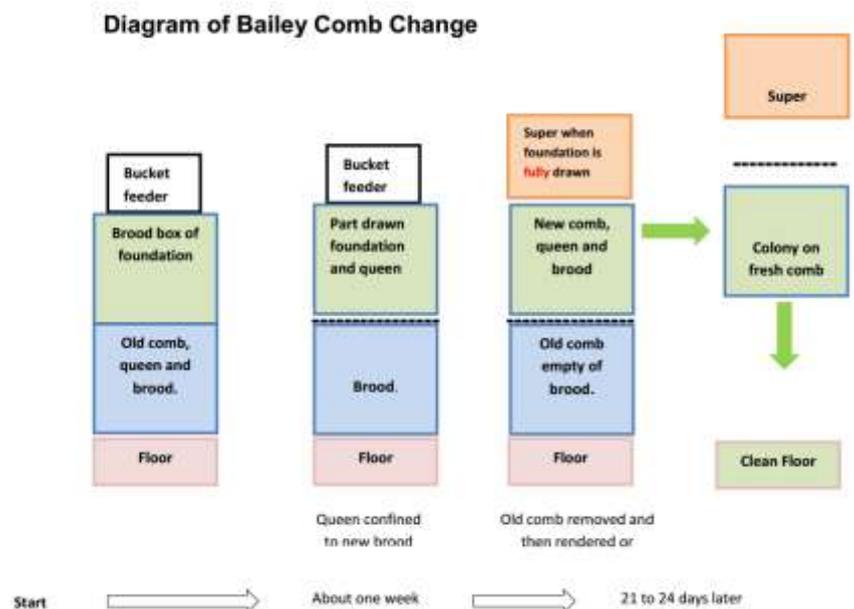
You will need

- Spare brood box
- Full set of frames fitted with new foundation
- Queen excluder Feeder (bucket type is best)
- One or two dummy boards

## How to do the Bailey Comb Change

The idea behind this technique is to place a new brood box on top of the old one. When the bees have started to draw out the new foundation, the queen is moved into the top box and kept there by placing a queen excluder between the two brood boxes.

- 1) Prepare a complete set of frames in a clean brood box using fresh foundation. If your foundation has been stored over the winter and has gone hard, warm it gently with a hair dryer to release the natural oils.
- 2) Remove all of the old frames that do not contain any brood. Put dummy boards either side so that the remaining frames are directly behind the entrance. If your brood box has the frames parallel with the entrance (warm way) you can push all the remaining frames to the front and you only need one dummy board. If you have a super on the hive, shake the bees out and take it away. Store it in a black dustbin bag and you can put it back later.
- 3) Place the new brood box on top of the old brood box. Do not place a queen excluder between them.
- 4) Make up strong sugar syrup from 2 kg granulated sugar plus 1.2 litres water. Place this in the feeder above the new brood box. If your feeder is not big enough to hold this amount of syrup you will need to go back after a few days to replenish it.
- 5) After 7 days, check that the bees have started to draw out the new foundation. If they have, find the queen and put her into the top box and place a queen excluder between the two brood boxes (see diagram). Make up another 2kg sugar syrup and refill the feeder.
- 6) If the bees have not started to draw out the foundation after 7 days, leave them for another 7 days before moving the queen into the top box.
- 7) After about another week the queen should be laying strongly in the top box. You can now replace the super if you removed one at stage 2. You will need to use a second queen excluder (see diagram).
- 8) 3 weeks after the queen was moved up, all the brood in the bottom box should have emerged and the box can be removed.
- 9) At the end of the operation you should fit a new floor or thoroughly clean the existing floor.



An important point to remember when doing the Bailey Comb Change is that bees will only draw new comb when they need to. This means that there must be food coming in - i.e. the syrup you give them - and they must be short of space to store it. This is the reason why it is important to remove the super and any brood frames that do not contain brood. If you don't, the bees will simply put the syrup in these frames and ignore the new brood box. Many Bailey comb changes fail because the beekeepers don't take this into account. The earlier you do the comb change the better it will be. Depending on the weather, late March or early April is a good time. Even though the queen will have a full brood box to lay in, it is not unusual for the bees to start swarming preparations, so be alert and ready to implement your favourite swarm control procedure (you do have one?!)

Reference: NBU fact sheet 5 "[replacing old brood comb](#)"

## BEES AND BEANS

Citizen Science at University of Sussex



Another plug for activities organized at the University of Sussex. Some of you got involved with the Bees and Beans programme in 2014 – and in

2015, the project will again engage with gardeners, beekeepers and schools to learn more about how to support a broad spectrum of insect pollinators.

### *Project Rationale*

Our wild pollinators are under threat from a variety of sources, such as habitat loss, changes in agricultural land use and management, climate change and disease. With one in three bites of food that we eat being produced as a result of insect-mediated pollination, and over 80% of EU crop species needing some degree of pollination activity to produce a harvest, the loss of pollinators is a serious and current concern.

There is a need to take measurements of UK pollinator populations, so that conservation effort can be best targeted at places that need it, and successes and declines in populations can be identified. There is also a need to offer opportunities for people to get engaged with the natural environment around them, to show that 'wildlife' and its beneficial interactions with humans is not something that happens exclusively in the countryside or distant 'wild' areas, but is something that can be seen and understood in the same places that we live.

### *Individual Gardeners*

Sign up for Bees 'n Beans now at [this website](#), with project kits posted out to volunteers over March. Planting seeds and kicking off the actual experiment will be at the start of April - when the weather will hopefully have improved. A project kit will be supplied containing:

- seeds. 12x broad bean seeds ('The Sutton', dwarf variety), and 20x 'rat tailed' radish seeds.
- Pots. 10x fold-down 3L polythene pots. These will make sure that all the plants have the same amount of soil to grow in.
- Instructions and a paper recording sheet.

You will need to supply soil (any compost will do), 2m of garden fleece (about 1m for each bagged plant), sticks to stop plants falling over, and plant food when they start to produce pods. The instructions will guide you through how to set up and what to do / when, and w Bees 'n Beans will be available to answer questions by email, twitter and phone if you have queries. Also fill out the "Need for Bees" survey [here](#).

### *School Spaces*

The idea is to use the Bees 'n Beans methodology to measure and compare pollination provision around the school grounds; setting up small, easily-managed experiments that will allow the results to be compared within the overall site, between schools, and across the country to see if there are local and regional differences in pollination.

Bees 'n Beans is a simple, cheap and fun piece of outdoor fieldwork suitable for all ages, that can be used to explore ecological thinking, as well as scientific practice, and show how individual projects can contribute to large-scale pieces of work. The project will run from mid-March/April to July (because of the nature of growing plants), and should fit in around school holidays, although there may be a requirement to ensure adequate watering over the spring bank holiday half term.

If you are actively engaged with a local school, then why not propose that they [sign up](#)? Note that there is a deadline of March 7<sup>th</sup> to register for the Schools project.



## COURSES AT THE BEE BARN



www.mannlake.co.uk • 01227 833807

beekeeper@mannlake.co.uk

Ellie Philpott, the PR Manager at Mann Lake in Bridge ("Patrick's place") has asked me to let you know that they are running a series of craft workshops over the next few months:

- Learn how to make mead (28<sup>th</sup> March)
- make your own beeswax candles (16<sup>th</sup> May)
- make your own beeswax lip balm & body bars (16<sup>th</sup> May)

You can find out more from their website [here](#)

## SCIENCE IN BEEKEEPING

### CABK Spring Meeting



**The Central Association of Bee-Keepers**

*Bringing Science to the Beekeeper*

Whilst we'd like to see all our members at our first apiary meeting of the season on 11<sup>th</sup> April, there is also an opportunity on the same day to see some lectures organized by the Central Association of Beekeepers, up in South London (Roots and Shoots, Walnut Tree Walk, Lambeth, SE11 6DN). There will be three exciting lectures, all based on latest research and brought to you by the scientists themselves.

*Dr Clint Perry, School of Biological and Chemical Sciences, QMUL*

How in stressed colonies the older foragers die earlier than usual, leading to more younger foragers. This leads to poorer colony performance, accelerating the decline of the colony.

*Dr Elizabeth Nichols, Sussex University*

How bumble bees can select desirable flowers by detecting differences in pollen (i.e. before they visit the flower).

*Dr Amr Sufian, Yemen & University of Liverpool*

A novel method for monitoring honey samples via the optical properties of the honey, based on chromatic methods developed at the University of Liverpool.

The meeting starts at 10.30am, and will include the AGM of CABK (scheduled for <60min). All are welcome at the meeting, and there is a voluntary contribution asked for to offset the expenses of the day. If you want lunch, then you will need to contact Pat Allen ([pat.allen@btconnect.com](mailto:pat.allen@btconnect.com)) to book at £8/head, payable on the day. More information on our website [here](#).

Adrian

## YALDING & DISTRICT

### Honey Bee Fayre & Auction

A fun and educational event for all the family with a wide variety of stalls and a programme of timed activities which includes something for everyone. Entrance is completely free, as is on-site parking. Food and refreshments will be available throughout the day.



To be held at the Riverdale Field, Benover Road, Yalding, ME18 6ES on Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> May. Gates open from 10:30am to 4.30pm. The auction will start at 2.30 pm.

For those wishing to enter bees or equipment into the auction entry forms can be obtained in advance by emailing [beefayre@yaldingbeekeepers.co.uk](mailto:beefayre@yaldingbeekeepers.co.uk) More information will be supplied on the Bee Fayre website in the coming weeks: <http://beefayre.yaldingbeekeepers.co.uk/>

David Bragg, Yalding Secretary

## BEEKEEPERS @ KSRC

### Courses in 2015



Beekeepers @ KSRC is now in its 4th year and its prime purpose remains the same – to provide training and education opportunities for “Improver Beekeepers” – principally those based in Kent, but all are welcome.

One change this year is that we no longer have access to the laboratories at Kent Science Park. Negotiations are still on going for classroom events, but we have already scheduled some husbandry courses. The aim is to provide coaching in reading the bees, proactive management, apiary hygiene and smooth, confident handling. You will get plenty of access to hives, working in small groups so that there's practical learning for each delegate. There are events on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, and 25<sup>th</sup> July, for which you can register by visiting our website.

[www.ksrcbees.org.uk](http://www.ksrcbees.org.uk)

Bob Smith, Julie Coleman and Adrian Davis