



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITOR'S NOTES

I'm sure many of you took advantage of the beautiful Good Friday weather to have a look inside your hives. Whilst I found all of my queens, the four colonies I have in my garden were in quite different shape: the biggest colony (on double national brood), had lots of stores in the BB, and a

saucer sized patch of brood on both sides of two frames.

Interestingly, there was a fair bit of drone brood (about 15%), which was a surprise.

Contrast this with its neighbouring colony, which had even smaller amounts of brood,

of which the capped brood was almost 100% drone. I'll have to keep a close eye on this, and see if the Q sorts herself out – otherwise this colony might be doomed with a drone-laying queen. The colony in the shaded part of my garden seems to have no interest in brood yet, although the Q was standing out as bold as brass. This colony in previous years has

been a lot later to start building up than its sister hives. Finally, I was pleased with the nuc I over-wintered – although there was little stores left in the broodbox, and they were ravenously attacking a pollen substitute patty I put on 2 weeks ago. Now that daytime temperatures are improving, make sure that your own

Next Meeting
Swarms, Casts and Control
Adrian Davis
Whitefriars
Management Suite
Wed 6th April
7.30-9.30pm
Joining instructions
– see page 2

colonies are adequately provided with water and food – colonies will have switched their "central heating" on full blast to enable brood rearing – so their food requirements can easily

exceed their ability to collect, whilst bee numbers are still low.

There's lots of news from the branch on p3 – we particularly keen to see new faces at our Bekesbourne apiary on Saturday afternoons. We also want to hear from people willing to be part of the Bee Safari on 14 May.

Adrian

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

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Contact Newsletter editor to contribute articles

APRIL 2016

A newsletter for friends and members of Canterbury BKA

DATES FOR DIARY

Saturday 2 nd April	Weekly inspections begin at Bekesbourne, 2pm
Wednesday 6 April	CBKA branch meeting, "Swarms, casts and control", 7.30-9.30pm, Whitefriars Management Suite, Canterbury
Friday 8 th April – Sunday 10 th April	BBKA Spring Convention, Harper-Adams University, near Newport, Shropshire (website)
Tuesday 3 rd May	CBKA committee meeting, 7-9pm, Old Gate Inn, Canterbury
Saturday 14 May	Bee safari with SBI, Kay Wreford Kent drone marking weekend
Saturday 4th June	CBKA branch apiary meeting, 2.30-4.30pm
Sunday 12 th June	Brogdale Strawberry Fair, demonstrations and stall
Saturday 18 th June	BeeDay, Whitefriars Precincts, information & stall
Saturday 2nd July	CBKA branch apiary meeting, 2.30-4.30pm Bekesbourne cutting back and barbeque
Tuesday 5 th July	CBKA committee meeting, 7-9pm, Old Gate Inn, Canterbury
Sunday 17 th July	Brogdale Cherry Fair, demonstration and stall

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.





BRANCH NEWS



Swarm Collection

Whilst we are still waiting for the BBKA public list of swarm collectors to be updated, the private CBKA list can be immediately altered by any member who wants to help out with swarm collection. We won't share the information outside our association, and Julian will find names and addresses valuable to get people out to swarms close to their home address. If you are available to collect swarms on behalf of the branch, even if only occasionally, then please sign yourself up [here](#). You'll need to login to the website first.

You should also do this if you need to do some restocking of your apiary with swarms – though we encourage everyone to try their hand at queen raising or colony splitting too. Members of the committee can give you advice and support about the various ways you can make increase without collecting swarms.

Bekesbourne Apiary

We will go to weekly inspections now that we are officially in Spring, so there's plenty of opportunity to participate in the inspections. Contact Martin Neame to sign up to the rota, get involved in inspections, or help out with apiary maintenance.

<http://canterburybeekeepers.org.uk/bekesbourne-apiary/>

The bees at Bekesbourne are in a variety of states of health after the winter. Whilst the bees in the topbar hive and Warre hive are doing well, the 3 National hives have not done quite so well – one has died, and one is very weak. It looks like we had quite a late supercedure in the dead-out, which might explain why there weren't enough long-lived winter bees. We'll be looking to restock from early swarms, or splits.

Bee Safari

Our meeting on Saturday 14th May will be a safari – Kay Wreford, our local bee inspector, will tour around with CBKA to help with spring inspections. Please let me know if you are happy to have us visit you on that day. In past years, this has been very successful; we can usually fit in 5-7 apiaries. Last year we started in Whitstable, and toured through Chestfield, Canterbury, Harbledown, Deal, and Hythe finishing up in Lympe – so we get a lot of value and time from our SBI. Members whose apiaries we are not visiting are welcome to join us at conveniently close locations.

We'd hope that each of the neighbourhood groups is represented during the tour, as it's a good way to re-start the seasonal support groups.

Email cantbees@gmail.com, as soon as possible, if you would like to put your name down for a visit by Kay. I will circulate the final details by email on or about the 7th May, so please reply before then if you want to be a stop on the safari.

New Members Pack

Through the winter, I've been doing some work with the help of the committee to refresh and produce new documents about the branch. You will all shortly be receiving a copy of the branch "Welcome Pack", which details the benefits and services we can offer to members. We've also updated the documents that we use at "meet the public" events – "about CBKA", "Calendar 2016" and "Gardening for Bees". These will be made available to members from our website.

We value your comments and feedback on these documents – look out for emails later in April.

BEES AROUND MY NEIGHBOURS' POOL

what do I do?

Like all living organisms, honey bees need water for hydration. This becomes especially evident during hot dry weather when natural sources dry up and bees begin to collect water from sources close to people and domestic animals. Perhaps less intuitively, in Spring bees need a lot of water, to dilute their honey stores, particularly if it has granulated during the winter.

Bees also use water for evaporative cooling in the hive. Bees collect water and distribute droplets around the colony, then fan the air with their wings to create an air stream over drops, causing the water to evaporate and consequently lowering the nest temperature.

Bees will collect water where ever it can be found. It could be from a dirty puddle, a pond, a brook, your swimming pool, irrigation system, birdbath, dripping outdoor taps etc. When bees come in contact with people, and domestic animals that they become a pest and quite possibly a health hazard. The following advice seems mean, but is meant to help when gentle neighbourly persuasion hasn't had the desired impact on toleration!

Tips on keeping bees away from pools

When you first notice bees around a neighbour's pool, you must try to make a more attractive source of water. What do they want? A reliably-available (topped-up!) supply of easily-found 'warm' water, with a safe beach where they can tank up. So a dark-coloured (solar warming) shallow birdbath in the sunniest-possible spot will get you the "warm" bit. Filling it with moss is one way of providing a safe (non-drowning, non-chilling) 'bar' for them to drink at. Ideally it wants to be 20/40 metres away from the hive – about as close as a waggle dance can describe its location! And if you were to "mark" it with a swarm lure or a few drops of lemongrass oil (not citronella lemongrass, the other one!) then the bees should be able to find it easily from the directions they are given by their colleagues (bees love hot tubs and septic tanks as water supplies because they can be scent-located, unlike 'clean' water!) Then it's just up to you to keep it from running dry...

Now the "tough love" bit, to placate nervous neighbours. To positively discourage the bees that are visiting water where they are not welcome, spray them with a soap-water solution. Soap-water solution: Mix one-part dish soap to 4 parts water in a spray bottle. Spray all bees around the pool with this solution. The soap-water solution will kill the bees but doesn't leave a harmful residue, unlike an insecticide. Spray every bee until no bees return for at least one day. This will kill those water foragers telling others in the colony where the swimming pool is located.

Eventually you will kill all those bees foraging at your neighbour's pool and prevent them from telling others about the pool. In reality you're only eliminating a very small proportion of the foraging population and an even smaller proportion of the total colony population. Other water foragers will find a different source of water – hopefully that which you are providing. It's unlikely that this pool is the only source of water within foraging distance.

Ideally, get your neighbour to cover their pool when it's not in use. To treat pet water and birdbaths: 1 part vinegar to 256 parts water (2 tablespoons vinegar to 4.5L water). The bees seem not to like the smell of vinegar.

Adapted from <http://honeybeelab.tamu.edu/beekeepingfaq/beefaq.html>



ASIAN HORNETS

On Saturday the 12th of March there was a workshop on Asian Hornet Trapping, held at Mann Lake's "Bee Barn" classroom at Bridge. Organised by Bob Smith under the "KSRC Bees" programme, it featured a presentation by Diane Steele, the newly appointed Regional Bee Inspector for our South East region, followed by the establishment of a production line to convert the pallet-load of brand new plastic bottles supplied into traps. In the course of the day, 40 or more beekeepers showed up from all over Kent. Starting from this workshop, Dougal Hendry has written a personal commentary about *Vespa velutina*.



The Asian Hornet has now spread across almost the whole of France, and into Italy, Spain and even into Portugal. There is uncertainty as to its presence immediately across the Channel from us, but in 2011 a single nest was destroyed at Somain (near Lille) and last Autumn a beekeeper near Boulogne saw what he (from his previous visits to the Dordogne, where the thing is established) believed to be Asian Hornets in his apiary at Desvres. Our cooler, more Northerly, climate may make life harder for it if it arrives, but it won't stop it coming.

In France the pest is still in the 2nd official category, which means there is no obligation on local, regional or national government (or indeed on property owners) to take measures (*i.e.* spend any money) to eradicate it. A promise to upgrade it to 1st category (requiring action be taken) was kicked into the long grass. This has naturally resulted in patchy efforts against the thing, with the result that it has become established and been able to spread, recolonising areas where efforts to eradicate it were (temporarily) successful.

And the French mistake, of not having a proper (funded) nationwide eradication strategy in place, seems to be being repeated here. It is not a "statutory pest" (like Small Hive Beetle, or the Colorado Beetle), and officialdom isn't minded to make it one. To change its status would need a major political campaign, to get the politicians to tell the officials what to do.

In France, pest controllers charge between €100 and €500 per nest for extermination and removal. Some communes (local council areas) do put their facilities at the disposal of beekeepers. The hornets' unmistakable metre-sized nests are mainly built in the very tops of tall trees, so access usually requires an hydraulic lift ("cherry picker") access platform. From the cherry picker, a suited beekeeper stabs the nest with a 15 foot long lance and injects sulphur dioxide gas. To avoid counter-attack from the hornets, all this is normally done in the dark.

Incidentally, SO₂ is not legally approved for pest control in France, but, hey, it works! (And its less environmentally damaging than most approved insecticides.) Can you imagine a UK beekeeper being allowed to use a Fire Brigade platform to administer an unauthorised poison in the dark? (Is anyone volunteering to write a Risk Assessment document that would placate the bureaucrats?)

Once subdued, the nest needs to be brought to the ground, sealed up and incinerated. Some enterprising French pest controllers have begun [using drones](#) to attack the nests! Now, there's an exciting business opportunity!

In the regions of France where the Asian Hornet has been around longest, beekeepers have recently found that Spring trapping of the hornets can reduce the number of full colonies that can establish. French officialdom claims this to be ineffective. The activist beekeepers' union, the UNAF, insists it works very well. New Hornet Queens (lots of them, unfortunately) leave the nest in Autumn and then hibernate individually in crevices, tree cracks etc. In Spring they need carbohydrate fuel to found a small nest and raise brood for a workforce to build a second, much larger, nest. In Summer, that larger nest needs lots of protein (*e.g.* bees) to feed its young - but in



Spring it is carbs (sugar) that they need most. So UNAF advise to set traps with sugary bait in Spring and so prevent that proto-colony from succeeding, thereby preventing the large colony from coming into being, and so protecting your bees (and many other beneficial insects).

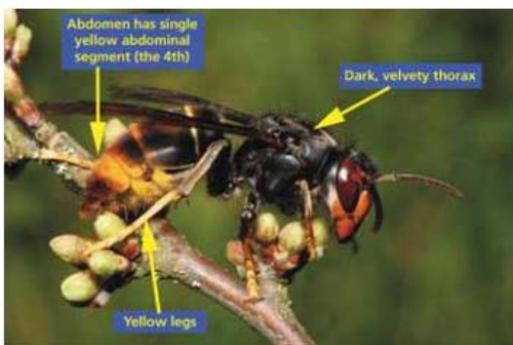
A 7mm entrance hole lets the Asian Hornet in, but that size of entrance should exclude (near endangered) European Hornets (which in any case only emerge later in the season, and that should close the Spring trapping season). A 5mm escape hole should let out many other insects, but retain the Asian Hornet in the trap. The NBU would like us to mount a trapping campaign as one means of detecting when the pest arrives in the UK.

So, how do you make a trap?

The French concept is just a variation on the lemonade-bottle wasp trap. 2 litre plastic ("PET") bottles are ideal. The top is cut off at the point where the shoulder starts, so that it can be turned round and fastened as a 'funnel' entrance. Before reattaching the top though, the cap needs to have one or two 7mm holes drilled in it. This was most conveniently done by screwing the cap onto the top portion of the bottle (to provide a handle!) before drilling.

Cutting off the bottom of the bottle, about 1/3 of the way up, allows the insertion of a grid (cut from varroa or other mesh) to prevent trapped insects actually getting to the bait, before 'sleeving' the bottle back together and securing it (for example with a wire). A plastic picnic plate makes a convenient 'hat' to keep rain out. A few bits of garden wire can suspend the assembly, and help hold it together. Small soldering irons proved a quick and simple means of making controlled size holes (for the wires and the escape route) in the PET plastic. The workshop had the benefit of a bandsaw for effectively and neatly (if noisily) cutting up lots of bottles.

Beer and fruit juices were suggested as attractive baits, with special mention being made of "Lipton's Peach Tea" ... Hang the traps around head height, near your apiary or wherever you suspect the Asian Hornet might appear. (Do you work in or near the docks?)



How do you recognise an Asian Hornet?

There was an article in [March's BBKA News](#) on this subject, with several photos. Read it again! The yellow lower legs, single (wide) yellow band on the abdomen and orange 'face' make for pretty conclusive ID.

What to do if I think I have an Asian Hornet in my trap?

Take the trap down, and seal it (intact) inside a plastic bag, then put the bag in the freezer for a few hours. After the insect is definitely dead, only then is the time to open the trap and inspect whatever it was. If you still

think it was an Asian Hornet, you could photograph it and email the photo around.

The intact insect body should be sent (in a matchbox, not a poly bag!) to the NBU in York, with your contact details. Officially the "Non-Native Species Secretariat" are the people to inform. Seemingly the email to use is alert_nonnative@ceh.ac.uk ... and yes, it seems they are not an executive branch of government, but they are the Agency in charge. As beekeepers, we are probably on our own. Hopefully the NBU will activate their 'response plan', but I'm not honestly convinced that they have budgetary approval to spend anything on properly dealing with the problem.

If *Vespa velutina* is going to be kept out, long term, there needs to be official designation (as with the Colorado Beetle) that this is something which can and must be prevented from establishing itself in the UK. With nests a metre across, practically, it can be found and eradicated. It isn't like an invasive fungus or mosquito which simply couldn't be sought out or dealt with. This thing is there to be dealt with. Unfortunately, it's just going to be in an extremely high place ... and we will need help to deal with it.

Anyone fancy trying to lobby our MPs?

Dougal Hendry

BEEKEEPERS @ KSRC

Courses in Spring/Summer 2016

Beekeepers @ KSRC



We continue to be able to offer practical bee-handling events in Bridge on 7th May, 17th May or 22nd June. 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.

Terry Clare will once again offer his popular "queen rearing for small scale beekeepers" courses. There are two alternative dates for the classroom course – 22nd May in Maidstone or 4th June in Bridge. These courses will be complemented by a practical course on 11th July at the Detling Show Ground.

All these sessions are not intended for novices; our target audience is definitely "Improvers" - those who have kept bees for a season or two and are keen to learn more, to improve their understanding and management of their bees. So, if you are interested, bookings may be made from the KSRC website - www.ksrcbees.org.uk

Bob Smith, Julie Coleman and Adrian Davis

BBKA SPRING CONVENTION 2016

The 2016 BBKA Spring Convention will be held at Harper Adams University 8,9,10 April 2016

Friday 8th April - Members Day & Trade Show

Saturday 9th April - Public Day & Trade Show

Sunday 10th April - Education Day

Harper Adams University, Newport, Shropshire TF10 8NB

Ticket Sales Now Open - [Click here](#) to order yours today.

This is a major event for purchase of new equipment. All of the popular equipment retailers will have a big presence at the Spring Convention, and typically have sale prices for anyone able to pick up from the Show. Thornes take pre-orders up until Tuesday 5th April. Mann Lake also have a sale running until 11th April (but you only need to get to Bridge!). Other companies no doubt have similar offers.



Spring 2016
Convention

BEE MARKET AND AUCTION

The West Sussex Beekeepers' Association is again organising a Bee Market and Auction for the benefit of its members and non members with beekeepers attending to buy and sell from a very wide area. The event will again take place at Chichester College's Brinsbury Campus in Pulborough, West Sussex on Saturday 23rd April 2016. Auction details, Guidance Notes and the Entry Form are available to download from the WSBKA website - www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk/auction.html. The Auction catalogue will be published online after 19th April.

We look forward to seeing as many of your members as possible at Brinsbury.

For further details contact me on email secretary@westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk or phone 01403 752493
Mobile 07761 349281

Graham Elliott

Secretary West Sussex Beekeepers' Association

www.westsussexbeekeepers.org.uk



Dear Association Secretary/Chairman

We are writing to you since you are shown as the Secretary or Chairman of a District or Area Association on the SBA/WBKA/BBKA web site and we would like to inform your members of a free newsletter that BIBBA is making available to anyone interested in improving their bees.

What is BIBBA?

BIBBA is the acronym for the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association. We encourage our members to form bee breeding groups to improve and propagate native and near native bees and provide help and advice. You can find out more here: <http://bibba.com>

BIBBA HUMM - A free e-Newsletter for beekeepers to be kept informed of our activities and to encourage more beekeepers to improve their local bees

Here's a link to the most recent BIBBA Humm newsletter : http://eepurl.com/bR_Hlf

BIBBA Humm will be issued periodically - as and when we have something useful or important to say. Maximum one a month but more likely to be between two and four copies annually. Please sign up for your copy here (<http://bibba.com/humm/>). You can "unsubscribe" at any time by clicking the relevant link at the bottom of the email.

BIBBA members receive a more frequent electronic newsletter with "magazine standard" articles and a hard copy magazine once (or more!) a year. Much of the content of this newsletter was in BIBBA Buzz issued only to members. If you wish to join BIBBA you will find full details on this link (<http://bibba.com/join/>).

with best wishes

Phil Khorassandjian

BIBBA Buzz & Humm Editor