



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS



A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITOR'S NOTES

With snow last week, and warnings of starving colonies and high varroa loads from the NBU, it was good to see some sun over the bank holiday. In fact, the whole "off-season" from October to April has not been conducive to the health of our bees. We are promised some more seasonal weather in the coming week, which will encourage colonies. Given blooming topfruit, dandelions, OSR and the horse chestnuts well on their way to bloom, we can expect that colonies will explode in size over the next few weeks. Make sure that your colonies have plenty of space for ripening and storing honey. If you use queen excluders, it's particularly important to check that there is always space for the queen to lay in the broodbox. Watch out for "walls" of pollen and move an unblocked frame towards the nest, if necessary. If you have healthy colonies still with honey in winter supers (probably granulated), you

can always put these boxes over the crownboard with a small hole, to get them to clear them out – hopefully they will consume the honey to produce brood and wax. You all should have your spare equipment ready to manage the swarming instincts that the May flows fuel – whether you use the standard artificial swarm

Next Meeting

Bee Safari

With SBI

Kay Wreford

Saturday 14th

May

10.30-4pm

Joining instructions
will be provided by
email. See p2

(Pagden), the vertical equivalent (Demaree), or other methods, be clear in your mind how to manage a colony that is has charged queen cells. In last month's newsletter we

talked about the importance of water to a Spring colony; I concatenated some useful suggestions from Dougal with some drastic solutions for use in an emergency. For clarity, remedies involving killing bees are a last resort, and it was not my intention to suggest this is a normal response to water collecting behaviour. Apologies to Dougal for any misrepresentation of his recommendations. Adrian

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Contact Newsletter editor
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MAY 2016

A newsletter for friends and members of Canterbury BKA

DATES FOR DIARY

<i>Tuesday 3rd May</i>	<i>CBKA committee meeting, 7-9pm, Old Gate Inn, Canterbury</i>
Saturday 14 May	Bee safari with SBI, Kay Wreford <i>Kent drone marking weekend</i>
<i>Saturday 28th May</i>	<i>BeeDay, Whitefriars Precincts, information & stall</i>
Saturday 4th June	CBKA branch apiary meeting, 2.30-4.30pm
<i>Sunday 12th June</i>	<i>Brogdale Strawberry Fair, demonstrations and stall</i>
<i>Saturday 25th June</i>	<i>BeeDay, Whitefriars Precincts, information & stall</i>
<i>Tuesday 5th July</i>	<i>CBKA committee meeting, 7-9pm, Old Gate Inn, Canterbury</i>
Saturday 9th July	CBKA branch apiary meeting, 2.30-4.30pm Bekesbourne cutting back and barbeque
<i>Sunday 17th July</i>	<i>Brogdale Cherry Fair, demonstration and stall</i>

BEE SAFARI

Our meeting on Saturday 14 May will be a safari – Kay Wreford, our local bee inspector, will tour around with CBKA to help with spring inspections. I'm still in the process of organizing the details with Kay, as it's a few days off. So this note is to remind you that we consider this a branch meeting, so we hope that lots of you can join in at various points in the day. We will definitely be visiting Deal, Staple, Bekesbourne, Chestfield and Whitstable, but there's room for one or two more apiaries if you want your apiary to benefit from an inspection – email me soon!

I will email the final schedule on or about 7 May with approximate timings, contact numbers etc. Just for planning purposes it will be very helpful if you can let us know which apiaries you are hoping to visit by emailing us at cantbees@gmail.com ideally before 9am on the morning of 14 May. On the day itself, please text Adrian on 07816 975286, but if you have problems finding the apiary, then the best person to contact will be the apiary owner.

Normal apiary hygiene rules apply – so please bring clean bee-suits, clean disposable gloves (no leather gloves), and wellington boots. If you need to borrow PPE, please let us know ASAP, so we can try to get a spare suit in the right location!





BRANCH NEWS



Bekesbourne Apiary

The bees at Bekesbourne are in a variety of states of health after the winter, but the apiary is looking particularly pretty at the moment! We hope to see lots of you at the apiary – either on the safari visit on 14th May, or at the regular inspections on Saturdays at 2pm. We are still developing the infra-structure – we've put some rubble down to help access, although more work is required to get a level track. Similarly, we are still figuring out the best way to communicate inspection results and management plans – during the inspection on 14 May, we will agree plans for the hives for the next month. All welcome to participate in the discussion.

Whitefriars Bee Day

Our first meet the public day is 28th May at Whitefriars. Michael Roberts is keen to hear from anyone who is able to help setting up (10-11am), attending to the stand for 1-2 hours between 11am and 4pm, or packing up at 4pm. Michael also needs folks to provide some honey for sale, whether you can help on the stand or not. All honey will be sold at a standard price. Please contact Michael Roberts at michael.roberts650@btinternet.com

Swarm Collection

Unfortunately we are still waiting for the BBKA public list of swarm collectors to be updated, however the private CBKA list can be immediately altered by any member who wants to help out with swarm collection. There's been a steady trickle of people signing up – thanks for doing that!

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.

New Members Pack

All the documents mentioned in last month's newsletter are now available from the website. You should all have received an email copy of the new "Welcome Pack", which details the benefits and services we can offer to members. It's also [here](#) on the website (login as usual first). Documents that we use at "meet the public" events – "about CBKA", "Calendar 2016" and "Gardening for Bees" are now available to members from our website - [here](#)

We value your comments and feedback on these documents.

Beeswax

Does any member produce wax on sufficient scale to be able to sell it on? I've recently had a couple of enquiries from members of the public about purchasing beeswax, which reminds me that this product always has a market, whether for trade-in for foundation (Thornes etc), for candle-making, or the more exotic (remember the beardologist from last year?) If anyone wants to supply wax, let me know and I will pass on contact details. It may be that we need a wax-rendering workshop – there's a lot of old comb in the Bekesbourne shed to render, and combining the brace-comb and scrapings from half-a-dozen small scale beekeepers would also generate a respectable quantity. Anyone interested? Email cantbees@gmail.com if you are.

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

POLLINATION CONTRACTS

I've recently been helping out with a bit of neighbourly discontent about bees at the bottom of the garden, which became quite an interesting story, with a happy ending. It started with a phone call from a lady in Boughton who was worried about four beehives that had "appeared" at the bottom of her garden. It turns out that she looks over a large orchard, and presumably the farmer had arranged for pollination services from a beekeeper. Now this lady and the farmer aren't on the best of terms, due to a previous boundary dispute, so the obvious step of contacting the farmer to find out who owns the bees, and why they are at the bottom of her garden rather than somewhere more remote didn't seem to be something the lady was prepared to take on. Instead, I got in contact with the Bee Farmers Association to see if they could help to find out who the beekeeper was, so we that could discuss it further.

Alan Hart is the very helpful pollination secretary, and via his database was quickly able to provide a name and contact phone number for the bee farmer, who is based in Lincolnshire. A couple of phone calls later, and we had confirmed that the bees would be moved away in a couple of weeks, and more importantly, the lady had a mobile number of the hive-owner, so she didn't need to talk to the "testy" farmer.

The bee farmer in question must be a busy man – as well as bringing his bees to multiple locations in Kent for top-fruit pollination, he is a seasonal bee inspector in his local area (Lincolnshire), so demonstrates that to make a living out of beekeeping, you need many strings to your bow, and a fierce work ethic.



BEEKEEPING CURIOSITIES

As part of my secretary/KSRC admin roles, I get a regular supply of unexpected or strange emails relating to beekeeping. This month, it has been my KSRC account that has provided the entertainment. We are advertising a "queen raising for small scale beekeepers" as you can see above. We were somewhat bemused to have a beekeeper from Tanda, right in the north of India, sign up for Terry Clare's course. It's all the more baffling, as he tells us that he 20 years' experience and is running ~1500 hives. I'm pretty sure that the Miller method for producing a handful of queens is not really what he needs.



The other curiosity is a phenomenon that is all too common following an article on beekeeping in a national newspaper or journal. We were approached by a person near Tunbridge Wells, who bought a FlowHive® having been attracted by the ease of honey extraction. You are probably aware that Bob Smith, an ex-seasonal bee inspector, is very hot on having beekeepers who can, well, keep bees successfully. His patient response is as follows:



As far as the flow hive goes, this is a very clever invention which I can see will be of interest to people who want to source small amounts of local honey. However, as with all new concepts, there are likely to be snags which will trip up new beekeepers and compromise the device. Of course, the hive was developed in Australia where the predominant nectar sources are from various varieties of Eucalyptus, this produces a honey which does not tend to crystallise. In contrast, in the UK, many of the early and late season nectar sources, such as oilseed rape and ivy, certainly do crystallise,

both in the jar and in the hive. I'm not sure how well the flow hive will cope with this problem?

My other concern is that the flow hive seems likely to appeal to people who don't want to look at their bees too often! Beekeepers are animal-keepers with the responsibilities that brings; they have responsibilities to the bees, to their neighbours and to their fellow beekeepers, responsibilities that they discharge through managing their bees to keep them healthy, to minimise swarming and not to create a hazard or nuisance to the public. All of these things require regular inspection of the colony if they are to be accomplished properly so I do hope that you are aware of what you are embarking upon.....

The very best way for you to take this forward, in my opinion, is to establish contact with your local beekeeping group, to see how they manage their bees and only then embark upon populating your hive, perhaps next year, once you have some confidence in your ability to manage your bees, in your hive.

I suspect that this wasn't the answer that our would-be honey harvester was hoping for. If you want a FlowHive, then may be inspect the ads in local papers, Ebay, Gumtree etc in Tunbridge Wells at the end of the summer?! In the meantime, if you haven't kept up with the gossip on the FlowHive, [here's](#) a reasonably informative article from modernfarmer.com, although with an American bias.

BEE FRIENDLY PLANTS

Bidens BeeDance®

Whilst the general rule for picking bee-friendly plants is to take your guide from wildflowers, or cottage garden classics, it does appear that the horticultural industry occasionally remembers that flowers are supposed to attract insects. I read about a new variety of *Bidens* in my Thompson and Morgan catalogue this Spring, and am now eagerly awaiting delivery, having been sold on the marketing.

"Do you want a garden full of healthy life? With the bee & butterfly attracting Beedance (bidens hybrids) you can make the world a little better. Bee amazed, bee inspired, Beedance! Beedance is a range of two striking Bidens hybrids, Beedance Painted Red and Painted Yellow, which are uniquely bicoloured. One is lovely yellow and red striped and the other is a beautiful red variety with a yellow heart. Beedance is loved by bees and butterflies, giving every garden and balcony a lovely biodiversity." Sounds almost too good to be true.

I look forward to sharing some images of flowers humming with bees later in the summer, but there's always a catch. These are sterile plants, so although they do produce pollen and nectar, the seeds are not viable. So you have to buy them every year – or ask an expert gardener how to propagate vegetatively.



STUDENT DOCUMENTARY

"We are looking to make a programme that raises awareness of the importance of bees to our environment, but making it accessible to a wider audience by focusing on the different uses of honey. The 10-minute programme would be shot live in the TV studio on campus (London College of Communication), with two pre-recorded segments. We would want two presenters in the studio - one well-informed on bees and honey (perhaps even somebody from your association!) and one new to the subject - guiding us through the programme. We are two BA Film & TV students at the University of Arts London currently in our second year of study. Also to clarify, we are only in the early stages of research at the moment; whether our idea will go to production is dependent on how well it is received by the rest of our course (we are currently preparing our pitch to present it to everyone this Friday). If the idea goes through, the whole documentary team will consist of thirteen people.



The first segment (shot outside of the studio) would have one of the presenters visiting a local beekeeper and learning about the process of honey-making (or, if the presenter is an expert themselves, tell us about that process). The second segment would be a DIY piece recorded in the studio prior to the show and focus on the use of honey for recipes and medicinal use (i.e. cough medicine, ointments, balms etc).

We would also like to feature interesting (and perhaps surprising) facts and statistics on bees during the live show and also focus on the more serious topic of bees dying out / the effect it has on us and the environment. Hopefully this would spark a new interest in bees for people who are not familiar with them! We would end with how you can find out more about bees / how to support them with links / phone numbers / to associations like yours. Please let us know if you or any of your colleagues would be interested in being interviewed / filmed and if you have any more questions!

Ava & Nicky (the team so far)"

(email cantbees@gmail.com to be put in contact)

Kent Bee-Keepers' Association is a company limited by guarantee. registered number 238630, registered charity number 222946.

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