



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITOR'S NOTES

In the last newsletter I was talking about early season activities – counting winter losses, looking out for signs of disease etc. This last week, all the beekeeping chatter has

been about colonies raising queen cells, collecting swarms and generally everyone running around trying to keep up with their bees! It just goes to show that weekly inspections are essential. If you've not managed to keep ahead of your bees, don't be

down-hearted – keep notes of what you saw and did, and let the bees teach you how to be a better beekeeper.

We are again employing mentoring groups to support newer beekeepers through the season. There are groups centered around Folkestone, Womenswold, East and North Canterbury and Deal – the key thing is close proximity. We're keen to ensure that all members - longstanding or

new - get involved to share expertise, and help each other out with little problems (or crises!) If you wish to be involved but are not "signed up", please send a mail to cantbees@gmail.com.

For those of you who have

at least a season of beekeeping practice, we'd encourage you to try the BBKA basic assessment – Julian is running a preparatory course, described on p3.

We had a successful bee safari at the

end of April, which managed to dodge the forecast rain – Julian and Roland have written up (on pp4-6) different aspects of that day for those of you who didn't manage to join.

Finally, swarm collection is an essential part of beekeeping and the phones are busy – see p3. If you are able, please sign up as a collector, whether or not you want to retain the bees.

Adrian

Next Meeting

Queen rearing
Preparations
Westbere Apiary,
Canterbury
Saturday 10th May

2.30-4.30pm

Joining instructions
– see page 2

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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

MAY 2014

DATES FOR DIARY

10 th May	Apiary meeting: Queen-raising preparations, Westbere
11 th May	Yalding Beekeepers Honey Fayre and Bee Auction
24 th May	Meet the public: Whitefriars, Canterbury
31 st May	Apiary meeting: Queen rearing
7 th June	AGM, Kent BKA, Detling Village Hall (near Jade's Crossing on the A249), 1130am
14 th June	Apiary meeting: Introducing new queens to colonies, nuc making, Waldershare
15 th June	Meet the public: Brogdale strawberry fair, Faversham
28 th June	Apiary meeting: Marking/caging/clipping We are looking for someone to host this meeting
11-13 th July	Kent County Show, County Showground, Detling
12 th July	Meet the public: White Mill demonstration, Sandwich
19-20 July	Meet the public: Brogdale cherry festival
27 th July	Apiary meeting: Extraction of honey
9 th Aug	Apiary meeting: Varroa assessments

DIRECTIONS

This will be at our branch apiary, Bredlands Lane, Westbere, Canterbury CT2 0HD. This is just off the A28 Canterbury to Margate Road on the left hand side before Hersden. Go up the road past Spires Academy, and the apiary is on the right hand side of the road. Contact on the day 07816 975286

As always make sure you wear freshly washed clothing and clean plastic gloves. No leather gloves may be used to handle frames.

There are 2 hives with bees at the moment – we will be making preparations to raise queens - to make increase, and also requeen a colony that is too feisty for regular work with beginner beekeepers. We will demonstrate a method for finding a queen in a colony that doesn't want to be inspected!



SWARM COLLECTORS AND BEES WANTED

Now is the time for swarms. We've already been able to fulfil many of our new beekeepers' desires for a "starter kit" of bees, collected as a swarm. We have some collectors available but I would appreciate more. People are often difficult to get hold of so please tell me when you are available and the best number or numbers to reach you on. It helps if you give some idea of the area you can cover. I normally try the nearest person first and then extend to those willing to cover further away. I do expect those who receive swarms to make a payment to cover costs to the collector and or the club. Be aware we also need to make visits to those with Bumble bee or solitary bee problems. This is part of our PR but we do recommend a donation to the club from those we help.



If you have a swarm you don't want let me know or use the bees wanted list and contact people directly. Those on the list are usually happy to receive a split or nuc so do help the beginners get started. This is one way those in mentor groups can help each other.

Place comment on the swarm page of the website or email directly.

<http://canterburybeekeepers.org.uk/control/>

Given that swarm collection can be a great advert for local beekeepers, it ought to be done well. The BBKA has a protocol for swarm collection, outlining the expectations of a swarm collector, as well as their guidance for how to take a swarm.

Methods for taking a swarm: link [here](#)

Protocol for swarm collectors: link [here](#)

Julian Audsley

BASIC ASSESSMENT TRAINING 2014

It's time to organise training for the Basic Assessment.

For those of you who have been keeping bees for at least one or two years and are reasonably confident in handling a colony now is the time to consider taking the BBKA Basic Assessment. This is an oral and practical assessment carried out by an assessor on behalf of the BBKA and held in a local apiary. It confirms that you have reached an appropriate standard; a bit like passing the driving test. If you have done one of my courses you will have covered most of the knowledge needed for the assessment.

To assist you we are going to run a number of theory and practical sessions to cover the syllabus starting on either the Mon, Tues Wed, or Thur, week beginning the 12th May. If you want to take part please email me and tell me which days you can and cannot do and I will pick the day that most can go on. julian100@btinternet.com or text 0776 183 9119. However, you can prepare for this assessment yourself. Just download the application form and syllabus from the BBKA web site ([here](#)) which must then be signed by one of the committee, and sent off with a fee. If you need more motivation, shown is the patch you get to sew onto your beesuit, should you pass the assessment!!



Julian Audsley

MEET THE PUBLIC EVENTS

Brogdale and Whitefriars



Last summer we made concerted efforts to go out and tell people about bees, beekeeping and all the wonderful products of the hive. These events give us all access to a ready and willing market for "artisan honey", which the general public will enthusiastically buy. As you will see from the diary of events, we are continuing with the successful "BeeDays" in the city centre, with the support of Whitefriars. Jenny Cotterill and Chris Bailes are coordinating this series of activities. The first of these is 10am-4pm on **Saturday 24th May**, and we are looking for volunteers to help out for a few hours – talking about the observation hive, gardening for bees, selling some honey and generally passing on our passion for bees. Please email cantbees@gmail.com to offer an hour or two of assistance.

We will also be attending the [Festivals at Brogdale](#) again this year, starting with the Strawberry Fair, June 15. Julian Audsley and David Cockburn will do some lectures, and we need people to help man the stand: Maggie McKenzie will coordinate the "rota". We will run a number of sessions during the day and normally have two people on duty at a time. Please let Maggie know when you are available and whether you can do morning or afternoon sessions (email cantbees@gmail.com). We also need to know if you can help set up on first thing, to arrive by 9.00am.



For events at both locations we will also send separate emails about a week before the event itself, but please try to make time to help out at one or more of these enjoyable "days out".

Jenny Cotterill / Maggie McKenzie

BEE SAFARI

Reports from our last meeting

On the day of the bee safari (26th April) I welcomed bee inspector Michael Cooper, and about a dozen other beekeepers of a variety of ages and experience, to my hives at Heart's Delight Farm, Kingston.

Having added a second brood box to a hive three weeks ago, my plan was that by doubling their space I could then sit back and enjoy the honey production of a huge colony. I then watched in awe as they drew out and filled their new box at enormous speed, and was keen to get some pointers on double brood box colony handling.



The girls were in good form, and received their visitors politely. The colony offered a textbook example of how most queen cells are produced at the gap between the two boxes in a double BB colony. However, numerous other queen cells, included a sealed one, showed the strength of their desire to swarm. It was a relief to find the queen still in residence.

Michael explained the level of vigilance I would need to manage the colony by constantly knocking down queen cells. I'd need to be consistently meticulous, and to increase my inspection frequency from its weekly pattern to do so. My plan began to sound less practical by the minute and, since I had all the equipment on hand to split the colony into two, we took the opportunity to do so there and then.

Michael chose his preferred unsealed queen cell, from a fairly wide selection. Although the chosen one was large and nicely shaped, it was interesting how he also based his choice on its central position in the frame – which protected it from both physical and temperature shocks. On the original location we left the queenless box, with unsealed queen cell. The other brood box took the queen, other queen cells carefully removed, and was placed on a second stand a few feet away. We debated blocking the entrance, but decided against.

I look forward to tracking the progress of both colonies, and am very grateful to Michael, Julian and others for their advice.

Roland Brown

The Full Version

Well many would have felt sorry for us given the weather forecast. On the morning I was making up frames in the garage with the rain teeming down and had more than one call asking if the tour was off. I am usually optimistic since we have nearly always got away with it.

Sure enough when we got to the first call the rain had almost given up. Our hosts had sensibly erected a large garden umbrella over the hive. Unfortunately the colony was very small and seemingly on its last legs. Deformed wing virus was very evident probably due to very high varroa levels – since icing sugar alone had been used which is not an effective method on its own. The remaining brood was infected with sac brood virus because the bees were unable to keep the colony clean. The bees needed to be put on clean comb and kept warm so they could raise healthy brood. A small nuc or mini-nuc was not available so we advised the beekeeper to shake them into a super that already had drawn comb and restrict the colony to the centre to make it easier to keep warm – feed sugar syrup 1:1 and add a quilt/insulation above the feeder and coverboard. If they recover a new full sized brood box can be placed on top. The old brood comb should be cut out and the frames cleaned and rewaxed. The colony had a purchased queen from last year. If a swarm becomes available then once the swarm queen is laying healthy brood she could be killed and replaced with the old purchased queen.

The next hive in a college in Canterbury was healthy and good strength the beekeeper asked us to mark and clip queen to help her control swarming which we did. And the sun started to come out!

We now moved to Kingston. The one hive was also weak and was not building up and again we recommended feeding with sugar syrup. We advised against the insertion of plural frames of foundation into the brood nest. Foundation should be added a frame at a time to the outside of the brood. This one should survive with gentle encouragement. We looked at another apiary in Kingston with two hives and, finding charged Queen Cells, we performed swarm control measures following the requests of Roland (see above).

Time wise we were running a little late which meant we had to turn down offers of refreshments knowing however that the next call we would be having a break.

We now arrived at Brian's house in Barham and were



able to accept refreshments and cake etc. – much needed. He has lots of hives but we only had time to look at two. Again we performed swarm control removing a queen in a nuke and reducing the queen cells in the main colony to one open one. These will need checking again in 4 days.

At the next call, in Saltwood, another queen was marked and clipped and another artificial swarm was performed - again using the "nuc" method, removing the Queen and relatively few bees, leaving an almost "full strength" colony to raise the new Queen and continue their honey-making with minimal disruption. This technique was a feature of the day - but it does make it absolutely vital that the beekeeper culls ALL additional ("emergency") Queen Cells that will be created subsequently. If such a colony were to lose a cast, it would be as large as a prime swarm. One colony showed signs of some minor illness in the brood, one larva was speckled black. Michael Cooper didn't recognise the problem (but was certain it wasn't a foulbrood) and advised a close watch (and potentially a call to him) in case it deteriorated further.

We then went up to Stanford at the M20 J11. Debbie's bees were extremely placid - she usually handles these without smoke. No health problems were seen.

Finally we end up in Sellindge and here for the first time came across a colony that wanted to fight back and Michael received some stings. This may have been due to the lateness of the hour, but nevertheless the beekeepers were advised of possible methods of re-queening, including using a frame of eggs from another member of their mentor group who had gentler bees. Temper notwithstanding, the colonies looked to be doing fine.

This was a very busy tour with eight visits – but luckily the weather did hold out for us. Thank you to Michael and all the hosts. Michael has asked for feedback on the outcomes of those hives where actions were taken or recommended, so please pass these to Adrian, so that we are all kept "in the loop."

Julian Audsley & Dougal Hendry

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. The target audience are those who have kept bees for two seasons, and have achieved the Basic Certificate.

An innovation this year are some practical beekeeping classes. 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.

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.

Practical Bee Handling (Coxheath)	Sun 11th May
Can beekeeping be a career?	Tues 13th May
Practical Bee Handling (Bridge)	Wed 28th May
Products of the Hive	Sat 31 st May
Foulbrood: recognition and control	Thu 12 th June

www.ksrcbees.org.uk

Bob Smith, Julie Coleman and Adrian Davis

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER MAY 2014

The Wonder of Bees – a BBC 4 programme with Martha Kearney has been showing on television during the last three weeks. This is good entertainment but I hope people don't think that this represents good practice. She admits that she has never had any training and what we see is a catalogue of mistakes, errors and misinformation interspersed with normal beekeeping. I mention just a few of the problems below.

She uses unhygienic and clumsy leather gloves explained later by an

apparent severe allergy to bee stings. She thinks getting bees through winter is a beekeeper's biggest challenge rather than maintaining healthy bees. She thinks seeing bees on top of the comb in snow in February are a good sign rather than an indication of running short of stores. And thinks if the bees are not at the top they may not have survived. She doesn't check amount of stores in comb and feeds too small amounts of candy by making small holes in the plastic bag but I would advise exposing the whole lower surface of the candy/fondant.

In spite of the pessimism all colonies survived although one was queenless. No attempt to remedy this was mentioned such as uniting with one of the other colonies. Strangely the experienced beekeeper insists on seeing the queen even though eggs are present before moving bees to a wildflower meadow. Presence of eggs indicates that the queen is present. When a queen is marked he says he holds the abdomen gently. This is risky and we normally advise holding the thorax gently. We also see an unframed queen excluder being added without removing the heavy brace comb on top of the brood frames.

There is some good information about varroa and disease in the second programme but when a heavy varroa outbreak was identified the new MAQS strips were added in the spring which is not a good idea. This treatment needs warm weather, minimum 12 deg at night and formic acid can leave a taint in honey. They examined an inspection board after one week which only showed a few varroa and should have made them realise that the treatment had not been effective, probably because of low temperatures in the cold spring of 2013. A better method I would always recommend is the shook swarm followed by feeding.

The aggressive colony they dealt with was the most frustrating of all. They successfully introduced a new queen into a nuc made from the aggressive colony although they didn't fill the old brood chamber completely with frames or dummies and left the queen excluder off. There were only 8 instead of 10 frames of brood. This meant the supers when removed had large sheets of brace comb below made in the gaps between brood combs.

Then came to the moment to kill the old queen, so they could unite the colonies. But they backed off because of the honey the colony had collected and repeated the myth that aggressive colonies make the most honey. She is now left with handling a difficult colony for the rest of the year and worse; the drones from this colony will mate with new queens in the area, perpetuating bad behaviour.

I know there are different ways of managing bees but please folks - don't follow any practices in these programmes without getting good supporting advice from elsewhere.

Julian Audsley 23 April 2014



HONEY FAYRE AND BEE AUCTION



The Yalding and District Beekeepers will be holding their third Honey Bee Fayre and Auction, on Sunday 11th May, from 10am to 4:30pm. The fayre will be taking place on Riverdale Field, Benover Road, Yalding, Kent, ME18 6ES. We are holding this event both to raise awareness of bees and beekeeping to the general public, and also to help raise funds to further develop our teaching apiary. All funds raised will go towards the apiary, with our (and the bees) thanks! I would like to warmly invite you, your members, friends and family to come along on the day and enjoy all the festivities we have planned!

Fun for all the family!

It is a great day out for the whole family, with face painting, live bee demonstrations (weather permitting!), an observation hive, lots of interesting information and stalls selling a variety of bee-related goodies - both for the beekeeper, and their friends and family, as well as plants and all sorts of other bits and pieces! We've had brilliant feedback in previous years from every conceivable cross-section of people - we really do offer something for everyone! We've also received some slightly less positive feedback - which we've tried to address this time around!

The Auction

Beekeepers' will, I am sure, be drawn to our Bee and Equipment Auction, which will be taking place on the day, from 2:30pm onwards. Entries into the auction for sale are still open, and will remain so until the day - please see our [website](http://www.yaldingbeekeepers.co.uk) for more information.

Stallholders

We've a beautiful selection of bee-related books and puppets, for all ages. We've also a wide selection of cakes, and plenty to eat and drink (ice creams too!). Honey and beekeeping equipment will also be on sale. Catering for the green-fingered amongst you - we also have a plethora of plants, selected with help from the RHS to be excellent for pollinating insects! We're also pleased to welcome along creators of stunning jewellery, gifts for the beekeeper in your life, and the Kent Smallholders group, amongst others. See details of all our stalls on our [website](http://www.yaldingbeekeepers.co.uk).

Make Your Own Bee House!

Young or old, come along to build your very own solitary bee house, to attract lovely friendly solitary bees into your garden, school or workplace!

We really hope you'll be able to come along - entry is completely free, and there is plenty of free parking on-site. Food and drink will be available throughout the day. You can see all our advertising posters on our website, where more information is also available ([here](#))

Steve Clarkson, Treasurer and Webmaster - Yalding & District Beekeepers Association
www.yaldingbeekeepers.co.uk