



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITOR'S NOTES

We're now into the summer proper, and whilst there haven't been too many scorching days, there's been plenty of good weather so colonies should be thriving and getting ready

for brambles, sweet chestnuts, limes and willowherbs to come into flower. I'm sorry that we had to reschedule a meeting at short notice, but we are able to take advantage of Malindi and Steve's hospitality this coming weekend. Let's

hope any rain holds off until we visited their beautiful location overlooking the Westbere lake.

We are holding a series of meetings with a focus on the various steps in simple queen rearing: at Malindi's, we will hopefully see a colony in the process of raising new queens.

At the following meeting, which is scheduled for 14th June, we want to practice the key skills of marking and

clipping queens. We won't be using queens for this – drones are perfectly adequate. Marking bees is something that is within everyone's capability – we just need to practice. Not everyone is comfortable with

clipping drones or queens, but for those who are, this will be a good chance for skill-sharpening. The only thing we need is an apiary with a colony that has a decent number of drones! Please let us know if you could host

this meeting.

Finally, we're now at the time of year when we go out and about to talk about beekeeping with the general public. Everyone who gets involved with this seems to have a good time – but we need a few more members to make sure we don't lean on the same volunteers every time. Please see the articles on p3 and p6 to find out more.

Adrian

Next Meeting

Queen rearing:
queen cell selection

Westbere Lane,
Westbere

Saturday 7th June

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

JUNE 2014

DATES FOR DIARY

7 th June	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: Marking/caging/clipping We are looking for someone to host this meeting
15 th June	Meet the public: Brogdale strawberry fair, Faversham
28 th June	Apiary meeting: Introducing new queens to colonies, nuc making, Waldershare
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

We will meet at Malindi Tucker's apiary, which is 6 Westbere Lane, Westbere CT2 0HH. The lane is quiet, but please park to minimise inconvenience to others. Some cars can use Malindi's driveway.

There are 4 hives with bees at the moment in Malindi and Steve's apiary. We will see the next phase of queen rearing using the Miller method – selection of well fed queen cells. We will also have a look at a recently hived swarm, that was collected on 1st June, to catch and mark the queen.

To help estimate numbers on the day, please reply to cantbees@gmail.com if you are planning to join the meeting. This will also help Malindi, and her beekeeper neighbour, Steve Gough, plan their catering. Alternatively, please text 07816 975286 with your name and confirmation.

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

For any queries or questions on the day, please call me (Adrian) on 07816 975286, especially if you need to borrow a bee-suit.

BEE DAY

Saturday 31st May

At 10am Saturday 31st May, a small group of Canterbury Beekeepers club members could be found in the town centre of Canterbury busy setting up a display stand under a couple of gazebos. We had brought along an observation hive full of bees including a queen marked with a conspicuous red dot and also had honey to taste and sell, pieces of comb, a beesuit, flower seeds to give away and other relevant items of interest.

Soon there was a steady flow of shoppers with partners and children in tow whom we could approach by asking "may I introduce you to some honey bees?" The eyes of the children immediately focussed on the hive. When we asked them to put a hand on the glass to feel the warmth, many of them did so with considerable trepidation, even though we guaranteed that the bees couldn't escape. The next task we assigned was to ask them to find the queen, nine year olds would do so in under twenty seconds while older people were significantly slower. By this time the ice was usually broken and people would be prepared to ask questions about beekeeping, drones, bee decline, neo-nics and honey. That provided a perfect lead in to an offer to taste some local honeys and usually a sale. It is still astonishing how many people confuse honey bees with bumblebees. Fortunately we had a supply of bumblebee identification leaflets which helped clarify the situation.

We talked to a lot of people, and at no point in the day were we hanging around being ignored though sometimes we had to go out and grab the attention of passers-by who were concentrating on their shopping. A remarkable number of people were visitors, either from out of town or from abroad. I personally spoke with people from China, Iran, Iraq, USA, Germany and the Netherlands as well as Yorkshire, Scotland and Ireland. I only spoke with a couple of beekeepers and that of course led to a

very different conversation about the differences from beekeeping in South Dakota.

May was too early for those of us who don't have access to rapeseed to have a crop so most of what we had for sale had been extracted the previous autumn and we rather soon ran out of stock to sell. Fortunately we had a good supply of nice creamy OSR honey from Julian to offer. The centre of the stall was taken up with the honey tasting, although we quickly sold out of most of the honey we had on board. People were surprised at the difference in taste between our local honey and generic product from the supermarket and as a result keen to buy a sample. The public remains fascinated when we



were able to tell them where each batch of honey had come from and in some cases the kinds of plants the bees had drawn the nectar from. The comb honey went very quickly and was so successful that someone insisted on buying the taster batch and proceeded to eat it there and then as he went along the High Street! Perhaps more of us should consider producing this scarce honey product.

Personally I was there for much of the day having fun talking about bees to people who mostly knew very little about them apart from what they'd read in the newspaper. So there was some opportunity to

correct misconceptions and even to encourage some people to consider taking up the hobby.

On previous occasions we had occupied the Whitefriars pavilion; which on this day was occupied for most of the day by local musicians of the easy music variety. So this meant that we were in the middle of the passing throng. Happily this made it easier to entice the public to see what we had to offer – something for us to bear in mind for our next Whitefriars event on 13th September. Despite the occasional rain showers it was a successful day. Many thanks to the other stalls who kept us supplied with tea and cakes. Also thanks to David, Maggie, Emma and Simon for helping run the stall. At the end of the day we all agreed that it had been great fun despite the inclement weather.



At no point in the day were there more than four club members present and at times we could really have done with more help as customers crowded round the stand and we tried to keep them moving. I would encourage any club member, even rank beginners, to spare a couple of hours to talk enthusiastically about their hobby with a willing audience. The next opportunity to pitch in will be on Sunday 15 June at Brogdale, we hope to see you there!
David Cockburn and Chris Bailes

QUEEN REARING

Those members who joined us at the Westbere apiary on 10th May will have seen Julian demonstrate queen rearing. There are several simple methods for queen raising that we'd encourage everyone to practice. You don't need any fancy equipment – just a second brood box. This method is for raising 1-3 queen cells from a single colony, so that you can

- Replace a 2-3 yr old queen
- Make increase by starting a nucleus colony
- Replace a queen in a spiteful colony (basic stock improvement)

The principle is much the same as the Demaree method for swarm control – but in this case we use a frame of eggs and very young larvae, rather than waiting until charged queen cells are seen. With all queen rearing methods, the dates are critical – use a diary and follow the timetable scrupulously, otherwise you may lose all your work, and possibly your queens in swarms!

Preparations

- The chosen colony should be well-behaved and strong – ideally with >8 seams of bees
- Drones should have already emerged in good numbers
- A good honey flow and reasonable weather expected for 3-4 weeks (!)

You will need

- additional broodbox and frames (ideally with drawn comb, but foundation will do)
- a coverboard with mesh covering any holes
- 3 lengths of 1x1 timber to make a temporary floor.
- Optional: frame feeder for syrup and/or pollen containing fondant (Neopoll, or substitutes)
- 5-frame nucleus hives, if you want several queens

Method

Day 1

- Move broodbox to one side, and put the new box on stand
- Find the queen, put the frame into new box. If there is no open brood add a frame that does, then complete the box with new frames (comb or foundation)
- Additional instructions below if you can't find the queen
- The remaining frames of brood stay in the old box. Make sure that there are plenty of stores (honey and pollen) – if not, add frame feeder and/or pollen patty
- Continue to reassemble hive – Queen excluder over new box, then any supers. Next is a coverboard, with holes blocked with mesh. Now construct a temporary floor with 3 lengths of 1x1, so that the new entrance is 180° to the bottom entrance.
- The brood containing box goes over that, with coverboard and roof to close.

Day 4

Inspect the colony and check that queen cells have been produced in the top brood box. Cull any that have already been sealed, as these will not have been fed well. You now know how many queens could emerge. If you only want a single queen, you can reduce to 1.

Check the bottom brood box, to make sure no queen cells are being produced, and that the queen has continued to lay eggs.

Day 10

If you are raising multiple queens, make up one 3-frame nucleus hive per queen for each queen cell. The bees don't have to be from your queen raising colony. The nuc should contain a good frame of sealed and emerging brood (not open), the attached bees, and two frames of honey/pollen. Shake the bees from a frame of open brood into the nuc, to make sure it's strong. Close this for a day, and keep in a cool place

Day 11

If producing nucs, transfer a queen cell from the cell raiser to each nuc. Open the entrance, having relocated the nucs to their final position in the apiary.

Day 13

Queens emerge. Whether you raised a single queen, or several for nucs, do not be tempted to inspect again for at least three weeks, as you may disturb the queen during mating flights.

Day 21

Mating flights will have started. Patience!

Day 35

By now the queen will be mated and laying up brood. If this is not the case, she is unlikely to come into lay, and she should be culled and the bees reunited with another colony (by the paper method).

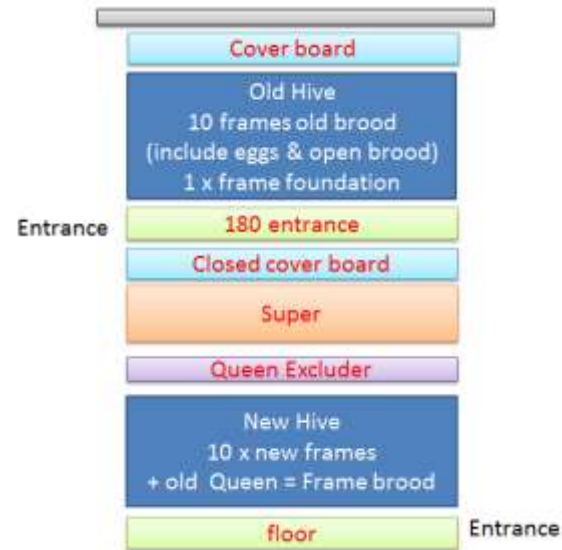
At this point, if you are raising a queen for replacement, then you can unite your top box with the bottom box, having first removed the old queen.

What to do if you don't find the queen

Slightly different process for the first few days

Day 1

Split the colony so that half the bees and frames go in the bottom box, and half in the top box. Put the brood frames in the centre of each box, and evenly distribute the honey and pollen frames. Reassemble the boxes as



before – bb with QX over, then supers, then closed coverboard, entrance with 1x1 timber, second bb, coverboard and roof.

Day 3

Find out which box has queen cells. If this is the top box, then you have got the colony how you need it. If there are queen cells in the bottom box, but not the top box, then you need to swap them around. In either case, rearrange the frames to make sure the brood is in the top box, which can be supplemented with food. As before, the bottom box needs a frame of open brood, with plenty of space for the queen to continue to lay.

Day 4 onwards

As before.

Apiary Demonstrations

In our apiary meeting on 10th May in Westbere, and at Malindi and Steve's apiary on 7th June, we have used variations on this general principle. Rather than simply put in a frame of eggs/larvae into the queenless brood chamber, we make cuts into a frame to form several triangles or flags. The reason for doing this is to expose the just-hatched larvae, and create lots of "edges" for the bees to draw down queen cells which should make it easier to harvest the cells.

At Westbere, we used a frame of larvae from a colony known to be of good temperament, so that we could raise a replacement queen, to improve the bad temper of the colony. This is the main reason for us all to develop skill in simple queen rearing – no one should put up with bees that are defensive, jumpy, or with a tendency to follow.



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 previous article 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.

We will also be attending the [Festivals at Brogdale](#) again this year, starting with the Strawberry Fair, June 15, from 10am-3pm. 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 maggiemckenzie@vfast.co.uk). We also need to know if you can help set up on first thing, to arrive by 9.00am. Even if you can't make this event, we'd be very happy if you can supply honey for sale.



After the Strawberry Fair, the next event is at the White Mill museum, as part of the Folk and Ale Festival in Sandwich, on 12th July. We are always 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 send "reminder" 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

THE RELEASE OF BOMBUS SUBTERRANEUS

On a warm yet gently breezy Monday in mid May, several Canterbury beekeepers joined others on the stony wastes of Dungeness where the third release of the shorthaired bumblebee took place.



Members may remember the visit to Canterbury beekeepers of the project

officer Dr Nikki Gammans. She told us that the once widespread shorthaired bumblebee is in general worldwide decline. It was last recorded in Great Britain in 1988 and was declared officially extinct in these islands in 2000.

A project set up to reintroduce the bumblebee had chosen Dungeness as being a suitable habitat, it being the last area the bumblebee had been found prior to its eventual demise in this country. It is also the home range of the Shril Carder bee, itself on the red list. Lengthy preparation had included a great deal of work with nearby farmers, who had agreed to put aside field margins as wild flower areas, spreading in such a way as to form a corridor of habitats suitable for the bumblebee. Strange to think of cultivating the white dead nettle whose nectar is a favourite food of the bumblebee. Work had also taken place with schools and local organisations encouraging homeowners and landowners to plant in gardens and meadows weeds such as comfrey, flag iris, vetches etc. The project is now certain that there currently exists suitable habitat stretching over the Dungeness Peninsula through to Rye Harbour.

Fortunately colonies of the bumblebee existed in New Zealand where it had been introduced (after many tries) by English settlers to pollinate red clover. It also remains a native in the Scandinavian countries.

An initial reintroduction from New Zealand had proved unsuccessful and because of the low genetic variability of the bees it had been decided to make further introductions from southern Sweden, an area of this country that has a climatic resemblance to Kent- apparently.

Dr Gammans and her colleagues obtained permission to collect a hundred bumblebees from the Skane area. After collection, these were chilled and ferried to the Royal Holloway University where they were quarantined and screened for diseases and parasites. Of the hundred collected only 46 could be released because of various health issues, many of those not released having been parasitised by a small wasp.

You will no doubt recall that two years ago, (the first year of reintroduction) was a particularly bad summer with a great deal of rain. Alas no evidence can be found of any of the releasees surviving.

Last year was more successful and following release worker bees were sighted, however no overwintering queens have been seen so far this year.

This year the queens were released in four areas of the Dungeness bird reserve, half in areas rich in white nettles, with a quarter on foxgloves and the other quarter on vetches.



Removing my bee from its travelling box gently on to a succulent vetch, I did ponder that the short haired bumble bee is not one of the most attractive queens. Large, completely black with a dark orange band on its abdomen it has a beetle-ish face. After being gently released and placed on an appropriate food plant, the bee made a couple of

orientation circuits before heading for pastures new.
I wished it well.

Future releases are planned and the reserve at
Lydden was posed as a suitable area. The work
continues and we will keep you informed.

Jenny Cotterill and Chris Bailes

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.

Products of the Hive

Sat 31st May

Foulbrood: recognition and control

Thu 12th June

Practical Bee Handling (Coxheath)

Wed 18th June

www.ksrcbees.org.uk

Bob Smith, Julie Coleman and Adrian Davis