



# CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

## EDITOR'S NOTES

For many beekeepers, August marks the end of one year, and the beginning of the next. Honey flows, at least outside of urban environments, tends to shut down, as the last of the wildflowers set fruit or seed.

Honey flows vary markedly from location to location, but I measured an average weight gain of nearly 20lb per hive in my out-apiary in the second and third week of July, but was disappointed to see that this had not increased

further when I weighed my hives on 1<sup>st</sup> August. Folks will be looking to extract honey over the next few weeks, and start to rationalize hive boxes and numbers.

If you are in the fortunate position to have some honey to harvest, remember that you can hire a tangential extractor from CBKA for a small consideration (£5).

There's a thread on the forum

where you can express interest, or simply contact me.

The next order of business is probably a disease assessment – is the hive badly afflicted by varroa? The easiest way to do this is to count the varroa drop on a board inserted below the

open mesh floor, over 3-7 days. You can then treat with thymol-based products, such as Apiguard, if there is a significant drop, > 5mites/day.

You must monitor the stores in a hive as well – particularly if you have harvested

honey. Make sure that there is also plenty of pollen being collected around the broodnest, and if in doubt, providing pollen supplements or substitutes will make sure that a colony can produce the maximum number of healthy winter bees, once you've reduced the varroa load.

Adrian

**Next Meeting  
Branch Apiary  
Meeting  
Saturday 6th  
August  
2-4.30pm**

CBKA branch apiary  
Palmsted Wood,  
Bekesbourne Lane,  
Bekesbourne CT4 5DX  
Joining instructions  
See p2

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

**cantbees@gmail.com**

Contact Newsletter editor  
to contribute articles

## AUGUST 2016

A newsletter for friends and members of Canterbury BKA

## DATES FOR DIARY

**Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August**

**CBKA branch apiary meeting, 2-4.30pm  
Palmsted Wood, Bekesbourne apiary**

Friday 26<sup>th</sup> August

Entries to East Kent Ploughing Match must be submitted  
Forms [here](#)

Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August

BeeDay, Whitefriars Precincts, information & stall

**Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September**

**CBKA branch apiary meeting, 2-4.30pm  
Eythorne, tbc**

Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September

CBKA committee meeting, Old Gate Inn, 7-9pm

Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> September

Closing date for applications for autumn BBKA exams  
Contact KBKA exam secretary ([details](#))

Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> September

East Kent Ploughing Match, Nonington 9-4pm

15-16 October

Brogdale Apple Festival, demonstrations and stall

27-29 October

National Honey Show, Sandown Park ([details](#))

Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> November

BBKA examination day ([details](#))

## APIARY MEETING

Palmsted Wood, Bekesbourne Lane,  
Bekesbourne CT4 5DX

<https://goo.gl/maps/EA4SF5ugxTg>

Saturday 6th August, 2-4.30pm

We hope that many of you can join us at Bekesbourne this coming weekend. This will be a typical apiary meeting. We need to assess honey yield (and perhaps clear some supers), make preparations for varroa treatment, and transfer an irregular colony onto standard frames.

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

Those members that were able to join us at the apiary in July spent a good deal of energy doing some woodland tidying, to make the track and parking a little easier for the remainder of the year. The bees were not very welcoming (see June's newsletter), and so we made an early retreat down to the barbeque area, where we enjoyed a campfire, skilled barbequeing (thanks Norman!), and a pleasant summer's afternoon in good company.

Whilst the following behaviour has not quite been stamped out yet, all the colonies were queenright at the last inspection, there is some honey to take, and we can start thinking about getting the colonies ready for the wintertime. Hopefully you can join us for a more routine apiary meeting **on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> August**.

Finally, there are still a couple of open inspection slots in late August, if anyone is able to lead them, or assist.

### BeeDay, 27<sup>th</sup> August

Very soon we will be running another event in Whitefriars Precincts, Canterbury, on Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> August. We need volunteers to talk to passers-by about bees, honey, pollination and point out interesting things in the observation hive. If you have honey that can be sold on the stand, we'd also like to hear from you. At our last two events, we been able to sell all the honey that was available, so whether you have a few jars, or dozens, please contact Michael Roberts to let him know ([michael.roberts650@btinternet.com](mailto:michael.roberts650@btinternet.com)).

### Brogdale Cherry Fair

A meeting report on the Cherry Fair: Eight members covered this event: Dave C, Magdalene, Michael,

Paul, Ernest, David B, Norman and Jan covering this event. Dave C initially only planned to come and do the set up only and he ended up staying a bit longer. Michael was a star, he stayed longer than he planned to deliver the second talk at 1:30pm. Norman was another star. We only had 5 jars of honey to sell in the morning. In the afternoon he brought 4 more jars of honey and a full frame of honey in a plastic box for honey tasting, encouraging everyone to get stuck in with the spoon. Jan and I went to listen to Michael's talk, it was informative, enjoyable and he had lots of response from the audience. I would say that this was a very successful 'meeting the public' event.

Magdalene Mei Halkes

### Swarm Collection

By its very nature, swarm collection is a fast-paced activity that cannot involve too many people. We were very pleased to hear from Karen and Mike Turner, who were able to raise £150 during their swarm collection activities, which goes into the branch kitty for equipment purchases and the like. As well as congratulating Mike and Karen for their efforts, it also goes to show that people do appreciate the effort that goes into a swarm "call-out", even if the bees are no longer there, or turn out to be bumblebees.

### East Kent Ploughing Match

The East Kent Ploughing Match will be held on 28th September in Nonington. More information from their website: <http://www.ekpma.co.uk/>. You may not have realised, but the East Kent Ploughing Match does have an element of Honey Show. There are open classes for both set and liquid honey. Please download and print off a Show schedule, if interested.

[ekpma – honey show Sept 2016](#)

## ZEIDLER TREE HIVE

Lower Pertwood Organic Farm, Wiltshire

I received the following invitation for circulation to members from Pertwood Organic Farm. They are having an open day on 13<sup>th</sup> August, which will focus on their first season hosting a Zeidler tree hive, which has been created in an ash tree on their farm by Jonathan Powell, a trustee of the Natural Beekeeping Trust. Please note the relatively short deadline to let them know if you want to attend.



You are cordially invited to attend a very special gathering at **Lower Pertwood Farm** in Wiltshire to discuss issues relating to the protection of bees.

Lower Pertwood Farm is a 2,100 acre organic farm that has been free of chemicals for nearly 30 years. This means that it is a very healthy and unique appetite for a wide cross-section of wildlife from microorganisms right up to mammals and raptors. We believe that nature should be in balance and we work hard to try and achieve this as a result of very sympathetic farming methods and by leaving large areas of the farm virtually untouched by humans.

We were delighted to host the first Zeidler tree hive in the UK and this appears to be going well. Obviously one of the reasons for the visit by enthusiasts like yourself is to inspect that and to listen to a talk on its origins and its merits.

**Jonathan Powell**, who was responsible for installing the Zeidler tree hive, and **Nick Adams**, our wildlife specialist, will be in charge of the programme for the day (see adjacent agenda).

We do hope that you will be able to attend this discussion which we believe will be very fruitful and which will also assist us to understand what more we can do to provide the best possible habitat for bees.

Regards,

**Wilfred Mole**  
Director - Lower Pertwood Farm

*Saturday 13 August 2016*

### PROGRAMME:

**10h00:** Arrival & refreshments

**10h15:** Walk to Zeidler Hive & presentation by Jonathan Powell

**11h15:** Farm Nature Walk guided by Nick Adams

**13h00:** Refreshments



### ADDRESS:

Lower Pertwood Farm, Hindon,  
Wiltshire, SP3 6TA

### RSVP:

Please confirm your attendance by emailing Louise Norton at [louise.norton@pertwood.co.uk](mailto:louise.norton@pertwood.co.uk) before 6 August 2016.

[www.pertwood.co.uk](http://www.pertwood.co.uk)

You can read more about the Pertwood project at the Natural beekeeping Trust's website [here](#). It's an interesting read with some great photos and video. For those of you who don't know your woodworking tools, (scorp, adze, maul etc), then you can see them being used to create a bee dwelling.

## WHAT IS A ZEIDLER TREE HIVE?

### Beekeeping history lesson

Forest beekeeping was a widespread activity in much of central Europe, with established records back to the 10<sup>th</sup> Century. Even when import of sugar from plantations in the West Indies became commonplace in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century, the price put it far out of reach of the average agrarian farmer, and honey remained the most common sweetener. Forest beekeeping started declining with the widespread availability of cheap sugar in the 19<sup>th</sup> century following cultivation of sugar beet.

Zeidler is a German word for beekeeper, with its origin in the old German word "zeideln" – meaning cut honeycomb. In the early Middle Ages, the trade of Zeidler became commonplace in the forested areas of Europe, moving from simple honey hunting, to active management of colonies. The change was gradual, evolving from simple tree felling, through to cutting holes to rob honey whilst leaving a tree intact. Eventually, practice developed to the point where a tree was cut with long rectangular doors, that could



be removed to get to the honeycomb. The tree would be closed up, and the aperture covered with branches. Markings made at ground level identified the ownership of the tree hive. In England in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century, Bee Coerls, the lowest rank of freeman (along with swineherds) were licensed to own bees or collect honey and swarms from trees bearing their mark. Zeidler formed guilds with legal powers and privileges, and across many of the Slavic and Germanic lands, guilds, led by their Zeidelmester, would police the forests, with punitive fines for bad behaviour such as obliterating tree marks.

Tree beekeeping is still practiced in the forested areas on either side of the Ural Mountains, by the indigenous Bashkir people, who speak their own Turkic language, as well as Russian, and are a majority Sunni Muslim community. There are efforts in Poland, Germany and Switzerland to re-introduce tree beekeeping practice, using the expertise of the Bashkir to guide these efforts. It seems that the Natural Beekeeping Trust is tapping into some of these projects, to introduce the Zeidler tree hive into the UK.

## NEWS FROM BIBBA

Just seven weeks until the Bee Improvement and Bee Breeders Association three day conference opens on the Isle of Man on Tuesday the 20<sup>th</sup> September.

### The good news

With a diverse selection of nearly 30 stimulating lectures on beekeeping for all levels of experience we intend to repeat the quality and buzz of Llangollen conference, 2014. Randy Oliver, well-known for his Scientific Beekeeping [website](#), is one of the keynote lecturers

### The better news

Time seems to have flown by this summer so we have extended the "Early Bee" discount until the 14<sup>th</sup> August for those who missed the original date: so why not treat yourself to a post-harvest break?

The lecture schedule, other information, and bookings link are all available at <http://bibba.com/?src=Conf01>

Trisha Marlow  
Publicity, BIBBA



## MAN AND BIRD CHAT WHILE HONEY HUNTING

A study suggests that humans and avians in sub-Saharan Africa communicate to find and mutually benefit from their spoils

Cutting through the crushing morning heat of the African bush, that sound is the trill of the Yao honey hunters of Mozambique. The call, passed down over generations of Yao, draws an unusual ally: the palm-sized *Indicator indicator* bird, also known as the greater honeyguide.

These feathery creatures do just what their name suggests: lead their human compatriots to the sweet stuff. Mobilized by the human voice, they tree-hop through the African bush, sporting brown, tan and white plumage that blends into the dry landscape.

This remarkable bird-human relationship has been around for hundreds—maybe even hundreds of thousands—of years. And yet until now, no one has investigated exactly how effective the call is. A new study, published today in the journal [Science](#), demonstrates just how powerful this local call is in guaranteeing a successful expedition.

The honeyguide collaboration is a striking example of mutualism, or an evolutionary relationship that benefits both parties involved. In this case, birds rely on humans to subdue the bees and chop down the hive, while humans rely on birds to lead them to the nests, which are often tucked away in trees high up and out of sight.

“There’s an exchange of information for skills,” says Claire Spottiswoode, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Cambridge and lead author of the study. Neither species could accomplish the task alone. Cooperation begets a worthwhile reward for both: The humans gain access to the honey, while the honeyguides get to chow down on the nutritious beeswax.

The partnership can be traced back to at least 1588, when the Portuguese missionary João dos Santos took note of a small bird soaring into his room to nibble on a candle, and described how this wax-loving avian led men to honey. “When the birds find a beehive they go to the roads in search of men and lead them to the hives, by flying on before them, flapping their wings actively as they go from branch to branch, and giving their harsh cries,” wrote dos Santos (translated from Italian).



But it wasn’t until the 1980s that scientists got in on the game. Ornithologist Hussein Isack first studied the behaviour among the Boran people of Kenya, armed with only a watch and compass. Isack elegantly demonstrated that honeyguides provide honey-seeking humans with reliable directional information. But it still remained unclear whether the flow of information was one-sided. Could humans also signal their desire for sweets to their feathered friends?

To answer this question, Spottiswoode and her colleagues recorded the trill-grunt call of Yao honey-hunters living in the Niassa National Reserve in northern Mozambique. For comparison, they captured the call of local animals and the honey-hunters shouting Yao words. With GPS and speakers in hand, Spottiswoode and her colleagues set out with the Yao honey-hunters into the African bush. On each expedition, they played back a different recording, noting the honeyguides’ response.

The researchers repeated the trips over and over, walking more than 60 miles in total. But it was worth it: they found that the Brrrr-Hm call effectively attracts and holds a honeyguide’s attention, more than tripling the chance that a honeyguide will lead humans to a bees’ nest compared to the other recorded sounds, says Spottiswoode.

“They’re not just eavesdropping on human sounds,” says Spottiswoode. Rather, the Yao honey-hunting call serves as a message to the honeyguides that the human hunters are ready to search for honey, just as picking up a leash signals to your dog that it’s time for a walk. What’s remarkable in this case is that honeyguides, unlike dogs, are not trained and domesticated pets but wild animals.

As African cities grow and attain greater access to other forms of sugar, the honeyguide tradition is slowly dying out, Spottiswoode says. This makes it even more important to document the intricacies of such relationships while they still persist. “[The decline] really underlines the importance of areas like the Niassa Reserve where humans and wildlife co-exist, and these wonderful human-wildlife relationships can still thrive,” she says.

Before you start seeking out your own honeyguide, you should know that these birds aren’t always so sweet-natured. Honeyguides are brood parasites, meaning that parents lay their eggs in the nest of another bird species. Once the chick hatches, the new-born pecks its adopted siblings to death in a violent effort to steal its new parents’ attentions and resources. “They’re real Jekyll-and-Hyde characters,” says Spottiswoode, adding: “It’s all instinctive, of course. [I’m] placing no moral judgement.”

Original research in [Science](#)

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