



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS



A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITOR'S NOTES

Whilst we've had a nice weekend, the first days of Spring have been characterised by wind and rain. Whenever the weather allows, the foragers will be getting out in large numbers. The blackthorn is in full flower now, and pussy willows are roaring with bees collecting pollen.

We are at a critical time for colonies, as the overwintering bees are coming to the end of their lives, and it's a frantic race to raise new bees to replace the workers that have stuck out the winter. Water, pollen and nectar are all needed in abundance – to dilute granulated honey, to produce brood food for the larvae, and to make sure the colony has enough energy to keep the centre of the nest at around 36°C.

On warmer days you might take a peek under the crownboard to see how the bees are – don't be frightened to give them

pollen substitutes, or sugar syrup if they feel light. Oil seed rape fields could easily be in flower in 4-5 weeks' time, so bees need to be produced in good numbers now, to make the most of that early crop.

Just as blackthorn flowers mark the start of Spring, so do unsolicited emails promising

good deals on hive equipment, some of which can be found at the back of this newsletter.

The BBKA Spring Convention is a regular feature, and there are usually good deals to be had there. You will see that we are wondering whether folk would like to put together a group order, to take advantage of

show prices, and shared transport costs (see p4).

Outdoor activities will be picking up in a few weeks' time, so make sure to read the branch news section on pp3-4 carefully!

Adrian

Next Meeting

Basic Queen Rearing

Julian, Joan and Adrian

Whitefriars Management Suite

Wednesday 15th

March

7.30-9.30pm

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Maggie McKenzie
Michael Roberts
Jan Soetaert

The easiest way to contact us is via email using the links above, but you can also use the contacts page on the website.

Contact [Newsletter Editor](#) to contribute articles

MARCH 2017

A newsletter for friends and members of the Canterbury branch of Kent BKA

DATES FOR DIARY: yearbook at <http://canterburybeekeepers.org.uk/calendar/cbka-list/>

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| Wednesday 15th March | Queen rearing principles – planning for queen rearing as a branch activity Julian, Joan and Adrian |
| Saturday 18 th March | BBKA modules examination day |
| Saturday 8th April | Working party – spring-clean around the apiary, Palmsted Wood, Bekesbourne |
| 7-9 April 2017 | BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams University |
| Saturday 22nd April | Apiary meeting, 2-4pm. Spring preparations. Debbie Burton's apiary |
| Thursday 4 th May | Committee meeting, 7-9pm, Old Gate Inn |
| Saturday 6th May | Apiary meeting (bee safari), with SBI Kay Wreford |
| Saturday 27 th May | Canterbury in Bloom – meet the public in Whitefriars, 10-4pm (date TBC) |
| Saturday 4th June | Apiary meeting (queen rearing) |

You can get our calendar, either as a google calendar (cantbees@gmail.com), or for other programmes using this URL: <https://calendar.google.com/calendar/ical/cantbees%40gmail.com/public/basic.ics>

INDOOR MEETING, 15 FEBRUARY

DIRECTIONS

Whitefriars Conference room Canterbury

Free parking in the multi-storey car park. Collect your ticket and this will be reimbursed at the end of 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.



SIMPLE QUEEN REARING



BRANCH NEWS



Palmsted Wood Apiary

Some of the committee met with Sally and Chris recently to share our proposals for activities in their woodland this season. We were delighted to hear that they have recently got married, and are planning a celebration in the Spring.

Congratulations from all of us to them!

We are keen to be the best guests on their land that we can be, and our next opportunity is to do a little woodland tidying in the environs of the beehives. Please let David know ([email link](#)) if you would be willing to do some light pruning, shift some logs, etc (all under Chris' supervision). The anticipated date for this is the afternoon of Saturday 8th April, and we hope to get a gang of 6-12 working together.

We'll also need some folks to help out managing the bees through the season – committee members are going to lead inspections, month by month, but we are very keen to hear from anyone who is willing to help with inspections, whether regularly, or on an occasional basis.

Queen Rearing Programme

We recently convinced the National Grid to fund the start-up of a bee improvement breeding programme within the branch. For the 1 to 2 hive (beginning) beekeeper it is not always obvious that the temperament of their bees is unacceptable as there is not much to compare it to. That is why it is so useful to join apiary visits and bee safaris organized by the branch and get experience. But even if the amateur beekeeper knows their bees are not on best behaviour, most of us cringe at the thought of disposing of a perfectly laying queen. Not all of us have the time and knowledge and confidence to raise queens to improve our bee genetics. That is why we think as a branch it is paramount that we provide well behaved queens and assistance with re-queening. If we stop the habit of perpetuating bad genetics in our apiaries, sooner rather than later

the overall behaviour of bees in and around Canterbury will improve to the benefit of all.

This is why we are appealing to all branch members who think they have extremely well behaved bees to step forward. We would like to assess your bees and if passing the test, we would like to put in a graft frame for a couple of days to collect eggs to raise queens from. Equally, we would like to know who has the worst bees that need re-queening first.

Please contact Jsoetaert@hotmail.com if you think your bees are Angels or Devils.

Our plan for this year is to raise a small number of queens from the best colonies in the branch and produce nucleus hives to overwinter in the branch apiary in Bekesbourne. If successful, these queens will be used next year as breeding stock to raise as many queens as possible to make available to branch members.

If you are interested in helping out and learn all about bee breeding this season, let us know by email on Jsoetaert@hotmail.com

Jan Soetaert

Bee Safari

An early note that on 6th May our branch meeting will be a bee safari with SBI Key Wreford. If you would like a professional appraisal of your bees' health, then nominate yourself for a visit during the day. Depending on geography, we can visit 5-7 apiaries during the day 1030-1730, so don't be shy ([email Adrian](#))

Branch Purchase Power

Although we have a commercial supplier right on our doorsteps in Bridge, there are savings to be made if we club together to make larger purchases. Although it may seem early in the year to be thinking about bottling honey, the upcoming Spring Convention is one of the best priced opportunities to buy honey jars. So, if you are thinking of acquiring some jars please let us know your preferred size and number. We'll need to hear from you by end of March. If enough people come forward then we can make a large order. Whether you want 2 dozen, or 2 gross, let us know ([email link](#))

On a related topic, if anyone has a dry space that could be used to hold large deliveries temporarily – for example room for a pallet (1x1x1m³) - we would be keen to hear whether you'd be willing to help with temporary storage.

Report from February Meeting

Stuart Andrews gave us a fascinating insight into the work of Bees Abroad and the people that they work with in Uganda. We were first shown a clip of the welcome given to him and his colleague Roy Dyche on visiting a local village with dancing and singing. The project he is involved with works with a local partner, Bigasa Sustainable Development Foundation (BISUDEF), a small local group who are trying to relieve poverty in this case through working with women, largely subsistence farmers with large families to support. The project is now in its last stage and women have now helped construct many Kenyan top bar hives and manage them. These group leaders have then trained other women in basic beekeeping skills, harvesting and preparing honey and wax for sale. They learnt to make their own protective bee suits but have been helped by a few simple resources such as smokers. Their honey is now sold through their local partner BISUDEF and is readily accepted for sale in local towns. It was interesting to see that they are still very wary of the

bees and tend to over smoke hives – the bees however did not seem particularly defensive. The methods used are an adaption of the traditional log hives still used in the area and attract swarms of bees to the hives with lures of scent and also catcher boxes placed to catch swarms in trees which are then transferred to hives. They do not practice swarm control or methods of increase we are familiar with.

We were shown the methods used to manage and harvest the honey and protect the bees from ants, lizards and other pests. We were then given some hive pictures and asked to spot the problem in each. Interesting discussion covered how to work in such areas of extreme poverty and how to provide the information needed locally. The emphasis is on initiating a sustainable beekeeping business which is not dependant on external aid after the initial support.

A very interesting and enjoyable evening.

Julian Audsley

Interesting Contacts

You might be able to help one or other of two people who contacted the branch recently. Martina Peruzza is a pharmaceutical chemist moving to Kent in March from Italy, who would like to start working as a beekeeper, possibly for a Company which produces skincare products, supplements and candles. Her emails are a bit sketchy (and possibly naïve) but if you are interested to give some advice to an Italian who's coming into Brexit Island, then contact me ([email Adrian](#))

Judy Butler is based in Thanington Without and would like to hear from anyone with unprocessed beeswax they might be prepared to make available to her. I have a phone number for Judy if you want to contact her.

BEES CAN PLAY FOOTBALL

Olli J. Loukola, Clint J. Perry,
Louie Coscos, Lars Chittka

Most people don't often think about bees' brainpower. Bees are generally regarded as tiny unthinking machines, flying from flower to flower, genetically pre-programmed to collect pollen and nectar and make honey.



But bees have some impressive cognitive capacities. Bumblebees and honeybees can count, navigate complex environments, learn concepts, use their uncertainty to guide their decisions, and even display emotion-like behaviour.

Recently, bees have also been trained to solve complex cognitive tasks such as string pulling and cap pushing to gain rewards. But as impressive as these tasks might be, they resemble some of the bees' natural foraging behaviour. Our research group wanted to test the behavioural limits of bumblebees by tasking them with something far removed from anything they encounter in nature.

So we've managed to show that bees can play football. Sort of. We showed that they can learn to move a small ball to a goal to gain a sugary reward.

To do this, we used a plastic model bee on the end of a transparent stick to move a tiny ball across a platform as a real bumblebee watched. When the ball reached a specified location at the centre of the platform, it opened access to rewarding sugar water. After several observations, each real bee we tested picked up how to solve the task and no longer needed demonstrations.

While mastering this unnatural task was impressive, we were curious to know how the bees were actually learning to solve it. So we tested three further groups of bees. One group of bees watched another previously trained bee move the ball to the centre. A second group of bees observed the ball moving to the centre "by itself" (we actually used a magnet under the platform to move the ball). And a third group of bees did not receive any demonstration.

The movement of the ball with the magnet was enough for some of the bees to learn the task significantly better than the bees who did not receive any demonstration. But all ten bees observing another bee move the ball to the centre solved the task much quicker and at a higher success rate than either of the other groups. This suggests the observer bees picked up something important from their fellow bees that helped them learn this unnatural task.

You can read the full article at

<http://theconversation.com/we-taught-bees-to-play-football-so-we-could-learn-about-their-brains-73485>

and the grown-up version of this article is at:

<http://science.sciencemag.org/content/355/6327/833>



Still Time to Book!



Spring 2017
Convention

Friday 7 ♦ Saturday 8 ♦ Sunday 9 April

Go to: http://www.bbka.org.uk/news_and_events/spring_convention.php

**25 lectures, 50+ workshops and courses
and great value hospitality**

The 2017 Spring Convention is just weeks away but there are still places available on workshops and courses. Book Accommodation and meals on-line until 26 March. All delegates need a wristband which gives admission to all lectures and the Trade Show, available at £22 'in-advance' until 26 March after which they are £25 'on the day' for collection at Harper Adams.

Trade Show Only tickets £5 – purchase on the day.

*Late Trade Show booking – Flow Hive – also giving a talk in the RFA
at 5.00PM Saturday 8 April*

**Go to the BBKA website to buy wrist bands and then click on
'BookEventsandServices' for courses, workshops and hospitality**

Make a great weekend of it





April 4th, 2017

Prof. Jamie Ellis Lecture

An evening lecture has been arranged with Prof. Jamie Ellis during his UK lecture tour. His lecture is entitled '**The amazing honey bee: design and function**'. The venue is the Leconfield Hall, Market Square, Petworth, GU28 0AH

Jamie Ellis is the Gahan Associate Professor of Entomology in the Department of Entomology and Nematology at the University of Florida, USA. He has a BS degree in Biology from the University of Georgia and a PhD in Entomology from Rhodes University in South Africa. At the University of Florida, Jamie has responsibilities in extension, instruction and research. Regarding his extension work, Jamie created the AFBEE program (African Bee Extension and Education Program), the UF, South Florida, and Caribbean Bee Colleges, and the UF Master Beekeeper Program. As an instructor, Jamie supervises PhD and masters students in addition to offering an online beekeeping course. Currently, Jamie and his team have over 30 active research projects in the fields of honey bee husbandry, conservation and ecology, and integrated crop pollination. Jamie is also a trustee of the International Bee Research Association.

The evening lecture will start at 7:30pm sharp so please be in your seats no later than 7:20pm. All welcome and entry is free to WSBKA members and just £5 to non-members.

NATIONAL HONEY SHOW 2017

As you'll all know by now, we're delighted to be returning to Sandown Park for the 2017 National Honey Show. The new venue means there's plenty of space to enjoy the fantastic display of all the classes including honey, wax, mead, photography and many others in the main Surrey hall, with the Traders next door in the same hall. The atmosphere is fantastic so we encourage you all to attend.

Our brilliant main lecture programme for this year includes lectures by Tom Seeley, Heather Mattila, Kim Flottum, Will Steynor and Peter Tomkins. There will be the usual series of Bee Craft Lectures on the Friday.

On Saturday there will be a special focus on the early years of beekeeping to help those starting out think about what to do next. The topics have been carefully chosen as being relevant to those new to the craft, with many of the things covered that beginners are often confronted with in their early years. and will be delivered by experienced beekeepers. It is strongly recommended that beginners attend all presentations and that local beekeeping associations or groups encourage their members to attend.

Follow this link to see the main lectures and Beginners programme:

<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/lectures-and-workshops.php#main>

It's a fantastic day out. In fact many come along for more than just one day. There's always lots to do, to see, people to talk to, friends to meet up with, endless coffee to be lingered over, the staggering exhibition of honey, hive products and crafts; the vibrant trade hall and of course the lectures and workshops.

This year's workshop programme includes the popular favourites plus – new for 2017 – "Setting up a Bee Breeding Group", "Labour Saving Devices" and "Making Wax Models". There will also be a Taster session on Saturday 'All you every wanted to know about beekeeping but were afraid to ask' for complete novices. National Honey Show Members will be able to book workshop places via our website from 1st September.

If you send your newsletters by email these days, you can include the link to the 2017 leaflet on our website at:

<http://www.honeyshow.co.uk/files/2017/nhs-leaflet-2017.pdf>

Leaflets for this year's Show will be available to collect from the Thorne's stand at Bee Tradex, and at The BBKA Spring Convention. Please collect some to pass among your association members, to place in delegates' wallets or pass around at your meetings, and to take to local and county Shows. If you'd prefer us to post leaflets to you, please email Val: publicity@honeyshow.co.uk

We look forward to a successful season and to seeing you and your entries at this year's Show: Thursday 26th to Saturday 28th October 2017 at Sandown Park Race Course, Esher, Surrey.

Best wishes

Fiona and Helen



Two adverts recently sent to branch members via the Secretary

I hope this email finds you well! I have just started up a small UK based bee hive manufacturing business producing hand-made Western Cedar National hives (www.chasehives.co.uk). I can offer discounted hives to your members (I am trying to build word of mouth business). Our hives are fully assembled - made from Western Red Cedar and priced less than most companies (£90 for a full hive).

If yourself or any of your members might be interested feel free to contact me. My email address is sales@chasehives.co.uk



Complete National Beehive
~~£200.00~~ £110.00



National Brood box
~~£30.00~~ £25.00



National Open Mesh Floor
~~£20.00~~ £18.00



National Roof
£25.00



National Super
~~£20.00~~ £18.00

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