



# CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS

A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

## EDITOR'S NOTES

How is your winter beekeeping going? If indeed we can call the weather of December and January winter – rather too mild and wet for my taste, and from the quick inspections I've done, the bees have been active and munching through their stores to keep the hive at broodraising temperature, rather than clustering to reduce fuel consumption. We've done an ApiBioxal treatment for varroosis at Palmsted, and all the colonies were given fondant, given the light weight of all the boxes. For 2 weak colonies, we also moved them into polystyrene nuc boxes, to make sure that the cluster could stay warm.

You should play close attention to your bees in the coming weeks, and don't be afraid to give them fondant (or even a moistened bag of granulated sugar) - there's nothing more depressing than finding a starved colony, as it's something we can intervene to fix.

In the high winds of a couple of weeks ago, one of my hives partly tipped over, which is a reminder to

regularly check hives in out-piaries. Provided they don't get wet, the bees can often sort themselves out if the hive gets knocked over, so here's hoping for some cold, dry weeks before the Spring.

Indoor Meeting

**Registered medicines in beekeeping: why bother?**

**Whitefriars Management Suite**

**Canterbury**

**Wed 5<sup>th</sup> February**

**7.30-9.30**

Details on p2

Thoughts are turning towards the season, and I have updated our branch calendar with all the planned meeting dates, shows and other activities. You can see a full yearbook on our website ([here](#)).

There are some things which might need your attention over the next couple of weeks – if you are planning to sit a module paper

from the BBKA, then the deadline for applications is fast approaching – and you have until the end of the month to decide if you want to do one of the more advanced practical assessments.

The BBKA Spring convention is only a couple of months away, and many of the workshops book up quickly, so don't delay if you are planning to go.

Unfortunately I won't be at the meeting about bee medicines this week, so I hope to see many of you in March. Adrian

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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

**FEBRUARY 2020**

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

<b>Wed Feb 5</b>	<b>Registered medicines in beekeeping: why bother?, Sebastian Owen, Vita (Europe) Ltd, 7.30-9.30pm Whitefriars management suite</b>
Mon Feb 10	Closing date for applications to sit BBKA module exams in March
Fri Feb 28	Closing date for applications to sit BBKA practical assessments
<b>Wed Mar 4</b>	<b>Palmsted apiary planning, 7.30-9.30pm Whitefriars management suite</b>
Sat Mar 14	Beetradex 2020, Stoneleigh Park, Works, CV8 2LG
April 3-5	BBKA Spring Convention, Harper Adams University, Newport TF10 8NB
<b>Sat April 4</b>	<b>Branch apiary meeting, 2-4pm Palmsted Wood. Getting the apiary ready for the season</b>
<b>Sat May 2</b>	<b>Branch apiary meeting, 2-4pm Palmsted Wood. Disease examination and growth assessment</b>
Sat May 30	Meet the public: BeeDay in Whitefriars, 9am-4pm
<b>Sat June 6</b>	<b>Branch apiary meeting, 2-4pm tbd</b>

You can get our calendar to integrate with your smartphone. For more detailed instructions, see page 4 of our [September 2019 newsletter](#).

## INDOOR MEETING

### Registered medicines in beekeeping: why bother? Sebastian Owen

Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019, 7.30-9.30pm  
Whitefriars Conference room, Canterbury

Sebastian Owen is a director of Vita (Europe) Ltd, a company specialising in bee health products. Sebastian has been in the industry since 2004 (with a four-year break when I lived and worked in Hong Kong), and became Vita's Commercial Director in 2018. His talk, "Registered medicines in beekeeping: why bother?" will focus on the approval process for varroa control products, together with a broader overview of honey bee health.

Vita Bee Health was established in 1997 and is focused on keeping the world's bees healthy and productive, with a product range including Apistan and Apiguard for varroa control; diagnostic kits for foulbrood; nutritional supplements and more, available in 60+ countries. Vita is based in Basingstoke, Hampshire, where we also run a small apiary on an allotment site.

## DIRECTIONS

Whitefriars Conference room, Canterbury

By foot / BUS

Between the Bus Station and Whitefriars centre 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 yards along this corridor.

By car Set SatNav 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.

Free parking in the multi-storey car park. Collect your ticket and this will be processed during 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.





## BRANCH NEWS

### Neighbourhood Groups

As the bee keeping season starts to get more active it might be that you would find being part of a local support group helpful. A number of local groups have been established, all still part of Canterbury beekeepers. These tend to be beekeepers informally getting together to offer usual support and advice to others who live nearby.

If you would like to be part of one of these groups please do just contact the link person nearest to you (but you are welcome to join any group if you would rather be part of another) and the link will keep you informed of any meet ups or communication forums happening between the people in that area.

If you are a new beekeeper and would like to have a mentor for the first year or so, please also speak to your local link person who can advise of someone either within your area, or if not available there, will put you in touch with someone willing to mentor you.

At the moment there are groups in:

**Canterbury** - Magdalene Mei Halkes ([email](#))

This local group used to meet up at Old Coach and Horses Pub in Harbledown or group member's apiary by agreement to discuss any support we need. All are welcome.

**Faversham** - David Austin ([email](#))

This is a newly formed group this year.

**Womenswold (and surrounding villages)** - Contact Maggie Mackenzie ([email](#))

**Folkestone area** - Debbie Burton ([email](#)) or Dougal Hendry ([email](#))

The Folkestone Cell holds fairly regular meetings, usually over a drink at The Drum in Stanford North (on Stone Street, close by M20 Junction 11).

Seasonal issues are discussed, help offered to new beekeepers and shared purchasing opportunities to save delivery charges. We occasionally have apiary safaris for shared help with honey extraction and varroa treatment etc. All local beekeepers welcome.

**Grove Ferry/ Preston/ Wingham** -

Janet McDonald ([email](#)). This group grew from a few beekeepers getting together and being in text contact with questions and queries. We've had a few meet ups, both bee related and social; the last being a shared supper and a frame

making evening. The group has grown recently and all are very very welcome.

**Broadstairs/ Thanet area** - Martin Swift ([email](#))

Another new group this year.

### Module Study Group

Whitstable and Herne Bay are running a couple of classes for folks interested to study for module 5 (Bee Biology) on Tuesday evenings up to 17<sup>th</sup> March, at Herne Mill. Unfortunately, I overlooked this email, so the course has been running for a couple of weeks, but if you are interested, please contact Adrian, and I will give you instructor Julie Coleman's contact details.

### Photos for Club Calendar

If you would like a Bee club calendar for 2021, with a variety of photos from this year, and with any proceeds going to the Club, please could you send me photos each month so that I can organise a calendar at the end of the year. Monthly photos show the bees in the changing seasons and events of the bee keeping year so it would be great to reflect that in a calendar. No need to be a top quality photographer - just snaps from phones is fine. Send to [janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com)

### Palmsted Apiary

Over the winter period there's not much to report about our apiary – and we plan to use our March meeting to discuss in detail how the apiary will develop in 2020. You might be interested to hear that we've agreed to be a "sentinel apiary", under Kay Wreford's gentle direction

We will be sent a Small Hive Beetle trap, either Correx floor insert or a Beetle blaster trap which should be placed in 1 or 2 hives for a week at a time perhaps once a month. We'll check the contents and record it on the log sheet. Also about once a month we will uncap a bit of drone brood and look for *Tropilaelaps* and record this. The most important bit is collecting floor debris twice a year and sending this to the lab. This is done by putting floor inserts in for a week and collecting the debris off this. These tasks can be easily integrated into the summer management of the hives, and gives some variety to the tasks required.

## BEE CLUB AT L'ARCHE

Last summer I ran a bee club for the L'Arche community, a charity for people with learning disabilities where I have links, for people interested in finding out more about bees. During August a group of us met each week and learnt about the bees, looked at virtual hives, the observation hive, visited Debbie's apiary, tasted honey, ate honey cakes, learnt about 'Bees Abroad' and made bee related crafts. A number of Club members came for one or other of the meetings to contribute their take on beekeeping. It was very well received and there is much interest for a similar thing this summer. If anyone would like to be involved please be in touch: [janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com)



Janet McDonald

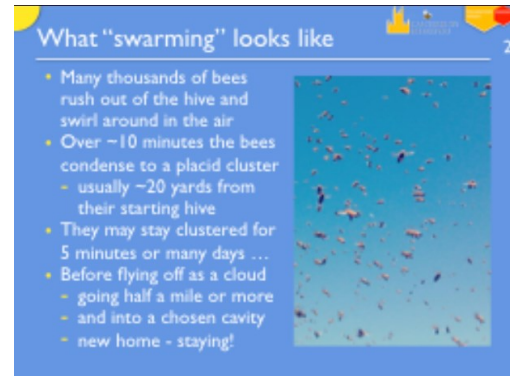
## FOLLOW-ON TO "MANAGING SWARMING" MEETING

These are additional notes following the Swarm meeting on Wednesday 8th January.

For reference, here are links to the slide decks presented

- The swarming process ([link](#))
- Swarm control – standard methods ([link](#))
- Collecting swarms ([link](#))

During the "Swarm Build-up" presentation, I chose NOT to introduce the subject of pre-swarm house-hunting, (and consequent observable interest in bait hives), because I don't want anybody to get the mistaken idea that a bait hive is in any sense a form of swarm control! It seems a bit like the parachute instructor selling life insurance!



Since bait hives did come up (repeatedly), then yes, during the time that the colony is building QCs, some of the forager bees will turn to scouting for prospective new homes, and there is a chance that you might notice that activity. One more clue as to when you need to be looking most carefully for those QCs.

Another thing that we skipped swiftly over was Queen clipping. This isn't strictly Swarm Control, it is about giving you a second (weekly inspection) chance to see Queen Cells before you lose a significant number of bees. If the Q can't fly, the prime swarm will be aborted and the workers will return to their hive. Regardless of the fate of the old Q, no swarm can get away until at least 8 days after the sealing of QCs (when the prime swarm was cleared for takeoff). Hence you get the second chance to spot those QCs.

Clipping shouldn't harm the Q, and will reduce the chance of swarm nuisance to your neighbours if you should somehow fail to notice QCs at the first opportunity. It is therefore particularly advised for beginners in an urban or suburban setting.

Simply removing all queen cells on sight will not overcome the urge to swarm. On the other hand it can prove disastrous for the beginning Beekeeper who may not have noticed that the bees have already swarmed, or tried to with a clipped Q. In those situations knocking down all the queen cells removes any chance of the bees producing a new queen, dooming the colony unless the beekeeper can provide assistance. Spotting queen cells is not an occasion to panic. On the other hand it is the time to put into execution the plans that you should already have worked out for how you will deal with swarming. It will happen sooner rather than later and you need to have your plans and equipment ready for when it does happen.

One of the things to be absolutely clear about is that once queen cells have been created and laid in ("wet"), there is no turning the bees back from the idea of swarming. An artificial swarm of some sort is necessary to satisfy their intention of colony reproduction, while allowing the beekeeper to keep her bees. Of course, the divided colony can later be recombined - after the situation has become stabilised.

**Standard Artificial Swarming (Pagden method)**

DAY 1

- Old BB (A) goes to a new stand (2) with QC, brood, nurse bees
- New BB (B) contains Q, 1 brood frame, supers and flying bees
- Any flying bees in A make their way to B

The diagram shows two hives, A and B, on stands. Hive A is on stand 1, and Hive B is on stand 2. Arrows indicate the movement of bees from A to B. The source is cited as 'source: Ian Honey, BBA News, March 2011, page 45'.

The standard artificial swarm is the Pagden method. Pagden actually created his method for dealing with real swarms - specifically the situation where he knew which colony had swarmed and he had retrieved the (prime) swarm from wherever they had clustered. Recognising this makes it easy to understand the artificial swarm method.

He moved the just-swarmed colony to the side and put another hive, with foundation frames, in its place on the original stand. Then he put the captured swarm with its Queen into the new hive. The old hive (off at the side) has got the brood and (mostly) non-flying bees. Over the next day or so any flying bees from the brood will leave their hive but return 'home' to the old stand and thus the new hive with the recaptured swarm. This situation that Pagden had created was that the original hive had been moved to the side and was left containing just the brood and attendant house bees, while on the original stand there was a hive of foundation containing the Queen and all the flying bees. The Pagden artificial swarm endeavours to replicate that situation.

Having identified that our Colony has open queen cells and is about to swarm, begin the artificial swarm by moving the whole hive to one side. Then bring in the replacement hive and put it where the original hive was.

Open the replacement hive and remove one of the foundation frames.

Now open the colony that was at risk of swarming. The first task is to find the Queen and move her, and the frame she is on, to the vacant space in the replacement hive. It is important to check that her frame is absolutely free of queen cells. If there are any QCs, remove them. Once she is safely in, the replacement hive can be given feed or supers and closed up.

In the now-queenless original hive, we need to select one queen cell to keep and ultimately become the new Queen. The chosen keeper should be very well developed, but still open, with lots of royal jelly and a healthy fat larva, visible inside the cell.

That cell and its frame need to be handled gently, but it does need two forms of special attention. Firstly it needs to be cleared of all other queen cells - for finding them you should brush or gently move the bees aside. Once that is done, the "keeper's" frame can be returned to the hive and marked with a drawing pin on the top bar (I try and put it directly above the keeper cell).

Now you need to methodically work through the whole hive and clear all the Queen cells from all of the other frames. To make absolutely sure that you can find and remove them all, it is a good idea to shake the bees off the frames into the hive. The marked frame with the keeper cell must never be shaken, as that would risk separating the larval Queen from its vital food supply.

Once you have found and removed all bar the chosen one QC, you can relax. Although the job of stopping them swarming will not be fully completed for another few days, for now you can close up the hive as today's work is done.

The job isn't completely finished because the brood bees can create additional queen cells from the eggs and larvae that were in place before the Queen was removed. A fertilised egg can be converted from worker to Queen as much as 6 days after it was laid! Any extra queen cells would cause swarming and so you are still at risk of losing cast swarms - therefore you need to think of minimising the extra QCs and removing any that may be built.

Although moving the brood hive to the opposite side of the swarm hive (the Heddon variation of Pagden's method) will bleed off flying bees and thereby weaken the brood colony, so discouraging them from building more QCs, I'd say it was still necessary to check to see that they do not build any extra queen cells.

The time to do this is a week (not more) after you have divided the swarmy colony.

You need to do a thorough search for queen cells, again shaking down every frame, except the marked one which can be brushed, and removing absolutely all queen cells except for your keeper, which should by now be sealed. These extra cells are not going to be only on the bottom and sides of frames - the bees are brilliant at hiding them almost anywhere!

With only one QC and it being too late to create more, there is then no possibility of losing cast swarms, so the brood and its QC can be left alone. While the new Q emerges, becomes fertile, orients herself, and goes off to mate, you must try to minimise disturbance and upset to her. Leave them alone for a bit!

She needs to mate within a month after emergence, and hopefully before then you will have noticed a dramatic upsurge in the amount of pollen going into the hive. That is your indication that she is coming into lay, and you can then resume inspection of her colony.

For next time, I hope to have a few notes for you on the care and handling of swarms that you have successfully caught and 'taken'. And maybe something on bait hives!

Dougal Hendry

**Standard Artificial Swarming (Pagden/Heddon method)**

DAY 8

- Old BC (A) moved to other side of B – location 3
- New foragers will return to 2, and drift to 1
- Reduces risk of a cast from A
- Feed box A!