



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS



A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITOR'S NOTES

Apologies for the lack of an April newsletter – like everyone else, I was adapting to the realities of working from home, social distancing at work and the general difficulties of having our routines massively disrupted. My family and I seem to have found a new routine that works for us all, and whilst I don't enjoy the days when I spent 6-7 hours on video calls, I know that I am one of the lucky ones who can continue to work, and from a house with a good-sized garden. Several of my work colleagues find themselves in small flats, with no easy access to outside spaces, which must be difficult to endure for so long.

At least as beekeepers, we can all justifiably spend time outside tending to our livestock, and at this time of year, beekeeping can be a real pleasure, particularly if you are otherwise constrained in what you can do. I posted a picture of the Palmsted Wood apiary on our Facebook page last weekend, and make no apology for

**May 2020
Isolation Edition**

reproducing it below – May is the best time to be at Palmsted, as the wood anemones and bluebells are in full swing, but the leaf canopy hasn't yet closed in. And of course, last week weekend was very warm too.

The success of your Spring will very much depend on how your bees over-wintered.

All members are encouraged to take part in the BBKA Winter Survival Survey. The more feedback we receive the better the picture we can build as to the status of our bee colonies in Spring 2020.

<https://wh1.snapsurveys.com/s.asp?k=158192743510>

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

MAY 2020



BRANCH NEWS

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

There doesn't seem much point in publishing the diary at the moment – most things are cancelled, right out through the summer. We heard this week that the East Kent Ploughing Match, a regular late September event, is the latest cancellation.

Brogdale have cancelled their events through to the end of June, which includes the Strawberry Fair. However, they are hopeful that thereafter with the space that they have, they may be able to run events across their 4 meadows and lots of orchards.

MEETINGS

Neighbourhood Groups

Whilst the restrictions on leaving home remain in place, we won't be running meetings, but we can meet virtually. Many people have become familiar with Zoom (although other video applications are also available). We encourage everyone to engage with other beekeepers, particularly those in your own neighbourhood. We have a number of groups, so if you need some help, or simply want a chat, reach out to the group leaders, and see if you can arrange a small group event.

At the moment there are groups in:

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

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

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

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

Grove Ferry/ Preston/ Wingham - Janet McDonald ([email](#))

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

Deal - Adrian Davis ([email](#))

If you want to get in touch with individuals, then many branch members have agreed to share their email address and phone number. You can find them by logging into our website and navigating to this page:

<https://canterburybeekeepers.org.uk/members-2020/>

Dougal has even converted this information into a Google Map, which you will be able to find at:

<https://canterburybeekeepers.org.uk/membership-map/>

PALMSTED WOOD

I haven't yet increased visits to weekly inspections at Palmsted Wood – in part because the colonies were relatively small when I inspected on 12th April, and partly to minimise unnecessary travel. However, on 26th April, things were much more exciting. The strongest colony is Guinevere, on a DN box, which had already been given 2 supers, as there's a field of Oil Seed Rape 300m away. The colony is doing well collecting honey, and had pretty much filled the brood box with brood (9 frames). To keep the colony from swarming, I added a 2nd brood box of foundation, and split the frames so there is brood in both boxes, and room to expand,

I was less in control of Gwyneth. Last time there was brood on 4 frames of 14x12 so I felt there was plenty of room for expansion and honey collection. The bees had other ideas, and by the time I got there on 26th April, they had already swarmed. All I was left to do was reduce the QC number down to 1, to prevent casts being produced, and take some photos for a game of "Spot the Queen Cells". Photos are in this document – for the beginners amongst you, this hopefully more realistic than a single picture in a text book.

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/1n5czipo9ulnazd/Queen%20cell%20spot-test.pdf?dl=0>

Let us know on Facebook, or in your neighbourhood group meetings what you would have done



BRANCH NEWS

Swarm management

The swarm season is up and running and quite a few people have signed up either as a proxy (17 members), or as a collector (9 members). With our centralised SwarmLine, this should mean that we get to hear about plenty of swarms, which will please the 9 members who would like to get a swarm to begin their beekeeping adventures, or re-stock after a bad winter.

AS evidence that the system works, Dougal sent me this photo of a collection a prime swarm (#2 of the year, I am told). If you haven't yet signed up, don't worry. Below I have reproduced the email that went out at the beginning of April. ...



We're doing swarm management a little differently this year, and want to involve as many members as possible. We'll be using our website as usual to collect some information to help our swarm coordinator (Dougal Hendry) meet all the requests. We will ask you to fill out some forms, that are inside the members-only part of the club website. To access them, you'll need to login with your password. If you have problems when you click the links below, please contact the Secretary to sort that out.

Everyone: we need your postcode!!

To have a better chance of hearing about swarms (so that we can collect them), we'd like as many members as possible to agree to be listed as a proxy swarm collector. All this involves is agreeing to be part of the BBKA system, entering your postcode, and entering the branch's "swarm hotline" (077 2660 2665) as the only contact phone number. We are particularly interested to

get more people listed in towns and villages outside of Canterbury.

We hope many members will help with the discovery of swarms by clicking [this link](#) but read on if you can do more.

I'd like to help collect swarms

This is the bread and butter of our swarm management service. We need people who can go out (usually at short notice) to retrieve bees from bushes and trees. We cover a wide area, so we all need to play our part. Fill out the form at [this link](#), giving as much information as possible. Hopefully the swarm hotline will do the call screening, so you shouldn't be bothered with calls about bumblebees or wasps in attics.

If you have not collected swarms before, we will try to send you along to observe (and maybe assist) a more experienced collector (subject to social distancing considerations), before expecting you to handle a situation on your own. Don't let lack of experience be a barrier to putting your name down!

Can the branch give me a swarm?

If you would like to give a home to a swarm, please fill out [this form](#) (it's different from the one that is linked earlier). We will do our best to meet everyone's needs, but as ever with bees, you'll need to be patient. Whilst we'd love to be handing out swarms to everyone in April, swarming will go on deep into the summer. Geography permitting, priority will go to beginners without bees and registered swarm collectors (as above). Please make sure you are absolutely ready to receive bees immediately (frames assembled, etc) before registering! If there are days or times when you cannot receive bees, please be sure to note that in the comments area.

If you would like another swarm, then fill out the form again after you have received one, with your new category for priority, so that you go back onto the list.

And of course, whether collector or receiver, if your situation changes, please email swarms@canterburybeekeepers.org.uk to let us know!



BRANCH NEWS

Branch Meetings

Whilst social isolation restrictions remain in place, it will be hard to follow the normal pattern of meetings in the branch through the summer. As well as trying to increase the amount of energy invested in the local/neighbourhood group network that was described earlier in this newsletter, we are looking at options to hold meetings, more akin to our winter meeting series. Nothing set in stone yet, so if anyone has ideas, please [contact the committee](#) with ideas for how we can help you with your beekeeping

Branch Organisation

Whilst it might seem early to be thinking about the branch AGM in November, we have a number of upcoming changes in the officers of the branch, so we will be looking to refresh the committee later in the year.

Joan McAllister will be standing down as treasurer, after many years of diligent service to the branch, and we have plans for other committee members to take over the management of our finances. Michael Roberts, our chairman, also plans to step down, having stayed on in the role for longer than he intended.

So we are looking for new branch officers. Of course, any member would be welcome to join the committee – but the officer positions do tend to need some accumulated knowledge of how the branch interacts with its membership and the wider beekeeping community.

One possibility is that Adrian, the current secretary, hands over his current roles to others, in anticipation of taking on the chairman's role. These realistically could be divided between several committee members, with interests in:

- 1) Newsletter editing/writing
- 2) General branch communication (eR2/gmail)
- 3) Website administration (Wordpress)
- 4) Apiary operations

It would be great to hear from anyone who would be interested to take on any of these activities. A little technical knowledge is required for website admin, but the general communications are

pretty straightforward, once you've been introduced to the BBKA membership system, eR2.

Please contact [Adrian](#) or [Michael](#) for a non-committal conversation about any of the committee positions that help to organise the branch's activities.

Bulk Purchases

We're interested to hear from members to gauge interest in bulk purchases. The conversation originated in making bulk purchases of honey jars, but could be extended to other consumables such as foundation or frames, that can be bought in large quantities.

What we'd like to know is the demand for such items – what discount would persuade you to source from the branch rather than an online supplier, and what are the items you would want us to bulk buy?

Please [email Adrian](#) with your suggestions

We have an offer of storage (thanks Debbie!) although it is near Folkestone, so might not suit everyone as a location for pickup. If anyone has the facilities to store jars, foundation etc nearer to Canterbury, we'd be keen to hear from you, too.

KBKA representation

See the next page for a vacant position on Kent BKA council for a Canterbury branch representative.



Kent Beekeeping Association

There is a vacancy for a representative of

Canterbury Beekeepers

to become a **KBKA TRUSTEE**

Represent your club at County level

CBKA is one of 12 branches of KBKA, and can have two members of the Council

Become a Charity Trustee

Participate in decision-making to influence the future of amateur beekeeping in Kent and public education about the importance of bees.

The commitment is just to attend 4 meetings during the year, and join the CBKA committee for (occasional) direction.

You don't need any special qualifications, but an analytical mind would help KBKA, and patience with other members will definitely prove valuable.

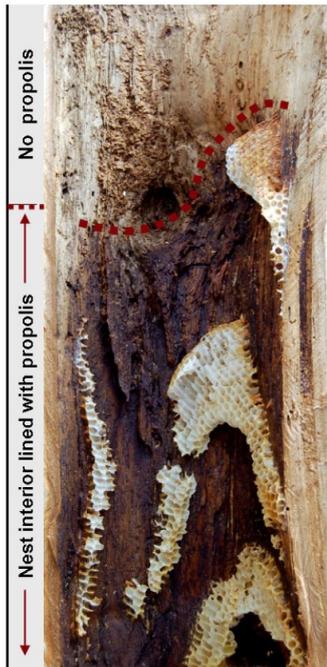
To apply, contact The CBKA Secretary cantbees@gmail.com

This IS something YOU can do, to help make a difference!

PROPOLIS IN HIVES

As the weather warms up, we increasingly see the effects of temperature on beekeeping. Yes, you sweat more (or glow, depending on your personal preference), the bees are foraging for longer and in larger numbers, so the colony may well be less worried about your inspection. The key materials of the hive also change in response to temperature – both beeswax and propolis become softer and more malleable. The propolis also becomes much stickier, and if you are doing a long inspection, can make your gloves and hive tacky and annoying to work with. I've even seen a hive build an entire "curtain" of propolis between the entrance and the combs.

For this reason, propolis can be regarded as a nuisance by beekeepers, but further investigation shows that there are additional benefits to propolis, other than being the building material of choice for bees to close off small gaps – spaces between boxes, spaces of <4mm that bees can't get into, and the material they use to reduce entrances.



In wild honey bee colonies, it's normal to find propolis coating all the surfaces of their cavity, up to a depth of 0.5-2 mm. In Tom Seeley's excellent "[The Lives of Bees](#)" book, he suggests that this is to seal off the innumerable cracks and crevices where moulds and bacteria could thrive. Utilizing propolis in this manner is also thought to function as a way for colonies to better maintain homeostasis of the nest

environment. This could be a result of preventing uncontrolled airflow into the nest, and waterproofing walls against sap and external moisture, in addition to creating some protection against invaders.

We also know that apitherapy – the treatment of human ailments with honeybee products such as propolis – can help with some infections, so it is curious that research on the health effects of propolis in honeybee colonies is a relatively recent topic of research. It seems reasonably well

[established](#) the extensive propolis use reduces the amount of chalkbrood (a fungal infection) in a colony, and there are similar effects on American foulbrood (a bacterial infection, mercifully scarce in the UK).

Whilst there is some evidence that propolis can suppress Nosema and Deformed Wing Virus (the signature viral infection caused by the Varroa mite), the research conclusions are currently less than compelling. However, this is more to do with the lack of large studies on the effects of propolis on the problems caused by varroa, than negative evidence. A general understanding of a colony's immune system is beyond me, but based on Seeley's book, it seems that the energetic costs of maintaining the hive's immune system are reduced, when a hive has a fully enclosing propolis envelope – mimicking the interior of a tree-nest. This allows the bees to allocate more energy to other tasks that are signifiers of health – brood rearing, wax production and foraging.

Taking this difficult biology through to practical applications for the beekeeper, Keith Delaplane has [demonstrated](#) that textured hive interiors increase honey bee propolis-hoarding behaviour. He induced this either by pinning plastic propolis trap material to the wall interior, roughening the wall with a mechanized wire brush, or making saw cuts on the wooden wall interiors (see pictures below). All had an impact, but there was a more consistent benefit from trap material or wood roughening over the saw cuts.



I'm trying out the plastic propolis trap on the walls of one of my broodboxes this season, although if this works I think I would switch to roughening the walls as it involves less cost (and less plastic!) It's not known exactly how the bees decide to decorate their home with propolis, but they appear to like smooth walls - perhaps the apitherapeutic version of wattle-and-daub!

Adrian

Beekeeping Headlines

“Rolls-Royce predicts it will set a delicious production record in 2020”

The company has 250,000 honey bees on its employee roster

Click the picture for an entertaining story about beekeeping at Goodwood. (thanks to Dougal for pointing this one out)



The Big Birthday Pub Quiz hosted by Prof Adam Hart

Support Bees Abroad on Wed 6th May at 8pm by clicking the image below



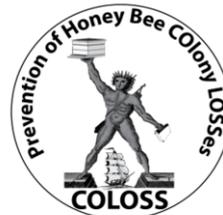
The Big Birthday Pub Quiz hosted by Prof Adam Hart. Please support us online on Wednesday 6th May at 8:00 pm

Monitor Honey Bee Colony Losses spring 2020

In the last decade, elevated losses of western honey bee colonies have been observed, mainly in Europe and North America, but the underlying causes still remain unclear. In 2008, European and USA honey bee experts formed a network "COLOSS" realising that efforts by individual countries to identify the drivers of losses were unlikely to succeed, given the current consensus that causes are complex and can be different between regions and between the years. Now more than 1000 scientists are working together in this network in specific working groups.

The epidemiological working group have developed a standardised questionnaire to identify the underlying causal factors of losses and provide beekeepers sustainable management strategies.

We now invite you to fill in the questionnaire for 2020 which you will find below.



<https://www.bee-survey.com/index.php/958611>

Monitor Honey Bee Losses Spring 2020
Please complete survey by using the above link.

<https://www.bee-survey.com/index.php/958611>

This will enable us to compare your answers with other beekeepers. With your data we can estimate the relative risk of colony losses for beekeeper decisions such as Varroa treatment, migration of colonies and comb replacement. We also aim to identify differences in relative mortality risk between regions. This will enable follow up reserch projects in specific regions.

At your option your personal details may be recorded however we undertake not to disclose them to any third party to protect your privacy.

Thanking you

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