



# CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS



A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

## EDITOR'S NOTES

About 45 members joined us for our May "Zoom" meeting led by Bob Smith. This is one of the bigger meetings that we've ever held! We have about 75 full members, together with about 40 friends, so the turnout was an impressive level of support.

Of course, Bob Smith is a very knowledgeable beekeeper, and I imagine everyone learnt something new from him. Even though I've heard his explanation of the "mature nest" before, it's good to be reminded of the honeybees' biological instinct to swarm from a full box, and the subsequent "cast" production a week or so after the prime swarm.

Hopefully your bees have thrived during the good weather and spring flows. Now that we are in the "June gap", it's worth keeping an eye out on your bees, particularly as the weather is going to be a little less glorious than we've become accustomed to. Depending on where your bees are, there may or may not be a shortage of forage – whilst the spring flowering trees have finished, you may be close to Limes, and of course domestic gardens should be paradise for bees, all the way through June and July.

At our apiary in Bekesbourne, we are anticipating the strong flow that is common for sweet chestnuts, usually at the end of June. This month is a great time to learn how to do queen rearing – the colonies are very strong, with lots of nurse bees, so are in the best condition to raise queens. Every beekeeper should try to produce a few queens, either to

make increase, or to replace those that are getting older (though it seems rare to have 3+ year old queens nowadays). I still have one colony headed by a 2018 (yellow) queen: that colony has been slower to develop than my colonies with younger queens, so I'll make sure that I have a healthy queen ready and waiting, in case the colony doesn't supercede her sometime in the coming month or so.

Your thoughts will be turning to the summer honey flows – for most that will be brambles, clovers, willowherbs etc, unless you have sweet chestnuts close by. Remember that honey production is directly connected to the size of the colony, so you might consider putting one of your queens in a nuc, and uniting her workers with another colony. But only if that was one of your summer objectives! Adrian

**June 2020  
Isolation  
Edition #2**

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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

## JUNE 2020

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



## BRANCH NEWS

### NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

As restrictions on meeting are eased gradually, the support and encouragement from local groups will be a good way of us maintaining our links across the club this summer. So a quick update on the activity of local groups and if you would like to be part of any of these groups then do just contact the co-ordinator.

#### Canterbury area

(Magdalene / [magdalene.chau@gmail.com](mailto:magdalene.chau@gmail.com) and Stuart / [stuartjandrews58@gmail.com](mailto:stuartjandrews58@gmail.com))

Magdalene and Stuart organised a Zoom meeting on 14th May for the Canterbury Neighbourhood group. However, her Zoom program was not updated so Jennifer Yard came to the rescue and several of us had short time to meet up. The best thing was two experienced members Dave and Stuart were there to give support to new members. At the time both Jennifer and Chris did not have bees. Since then Chris followed Dave's suggestion, set up a bait hive in his garden, took some videos and got a swarm very quickly. Jennifer also collected a swarm too. Stuart offered his support behind the scene to the setup of their hives. Jan and Andy could not join the meeting at the time, however, they both offered tips to Chris to add to his excitement via our email thread. Subsequently, both Jennifer and Andrew have collected swarms.

**Grove Ferry/ Preston surrounding villages (Janet / [janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com))**

This group has about 7 -8 people at the moment and is in regular contact via whatsapp after inspections with questions or details about swarms. There was a recent zoom meet up, and next week is planning to meet at an apiary in a small group, socially distanced.

**Folkestone area (Debbie/ [burtions@live.co.uk](mailto:burtions@live.co.uk) and Doug / [wdhendry@gmail.com](mailto:wdhendry@gmail.com))**

This group had a zoom meeting with about 12 people joining in, and a good discussion on how their bees were doing. Another zoom is being planned.

#### Deal area (Adrian/ [cantbees@gmail.com](mailto:cantbees@gmail.com))

There are a few experienced bee keepers in this group who know they can contact each other for support and questions, and can be in near vicinity of any problems.

**Womenswold/ surrounding villages area (Maggie/ [maggiemckenzie@vfast.co.uk](mailto:maggiemckenzie@vfast.co.uk))**

Update from Maggie: We had a Zoom meeting last week and it was so interesting to hear how everybody was doing and the ups and downs of the season so far. The group included someone who has just received her first swarm, so received lots of advice of what to do next; how to deal with a double brood box and some whose colonies that did not survive the winter. We all found it a good way of making contact (& seeing some other faces!) and have agreed to another meeting next month.

**Faversham area (Dave/ [dave@twomillionflowers.com](mailto:dave@twomillionflowers.com))**

This is another potential new local group with a few people at the moment - Dave is hoping to organise a meeting on zoom and would also be keen to hear from anyone who would like to take part.

**Thanet area (Martin/ [martin@martinswift.co.uk](mailto:martin@martinswift.co.uk))**

Martin has connected with a couple of other people in his area but would be delighted to hear from anyone else who would like to form a local group in Thanet.

#### Mentoring

Joining a local group may offer the support members need in developing beekeeping skills, but new beekeepers may want to have a 1:1 mentoring arrangement with an experienced beekeeper for at least the first season. This may be someone within their local group, but may be someone on the end of a phone to ask any questions and give support. To encourage and support our newly trained beekeepers we are hoping to establish which members would be willing to give a bit of their time to help and support them. We are fortunate in having some very experienced and knowledgeable

beekeepers in our club, but we also have members who have a few years' experience and could help with the basics, so please do think about this even if you don't see yourself as an expert.

Please could everyone who would be willing to offer mentoring support contact Janet McDonald ([janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com)) who is creating the list. If you could say in one or two sentences, the extent of your experience that would be great.

## 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 other types of meetings. Please [contact the committee](#) with ideas for how we can help you with your beekeeping.

## Photographs

I'm hoping to produce a CBKA calendar with photos of bees throughout the year. This year, perhaps more than any other, because we are not meeting up regularly it would be great to see a few different apiaries. And at this busy time of year there is much to photograph - so please send me your photos - the more the better! A photo of your hives, bee activity, swarms - whatever you think would add interest. It doesn't have to be a perfect photo - lots of snaps are fine.

Janet McDonald  
([janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com](mailto:janet.mcdonald@btinternet.com))

## Palmsted Wood

As per Bob Smith's advice, we do have some [defined objectives](#) for our branch apiary - which have been modified, given that branch activities such as Basic Certificate assessments and group honey extractions are not possible. You can see the revised objectives on the website. In essence, we are putting more emphasis on making increase, and getting more 2020 vintage queens - so far, we have Beatrix, Bethany and Barbie, and another colony has a queen cell to nurture.

Julian Audsley, Andy King and Adrian have been taking turns to look after the bees, splitting the stronger colonies in successive weeks through May. Julian was even able to take off 4 supers of honey this week, as there has been a good flow, even after the OSR finished. We suspect that it

was due to sycamore, although hawthorn is a possibility too.

Not everything is perfect - we are a bit short of dummy boards, so in some of the colonies we have 12 frames, instead of the regulation 11, which gives us a different problem from the nucs that were made up 1 frame short - skipping a couple of inspections whilst the queens got mated meant that the bees gratefully filled up the space with wild comb! Andy is channelling his carpentry DNA, and will be making up some extra dummy boards for us in the coming weeks.

## Nasty Bees

All of us look forward to opening up our hives and getting in among our bees. However, while some are enthusiastic others are looking forward with dread. If you can expect to be bombarded by irate workers who leave their stings in your bee suit, who focus on your ankles and wrists and who chase you down the garden, it's no wonder you dread bee inspections.

It doesn't have to be like that however and you can do something about it. A two-step process, bang the old queen on the head and replace her with a nice one. Surprisingly quickly she will cajole the bees into the new way of behaving, even before her own offspring are a majority.

Where can you get that nice new queen when you need her? The fastest and cheapest method is to approach your neighbourhood group. Especially at this time of year there may well be a member

who is busily squashing perfectly good queen cells because s/he has too many and who would be happy to give you one, maybe in exchange for a beer when the pubs open again.

Your club wants to help facilitate this exchange as follows: using our neighbourhood groups will allow those having and those wanting a queen to email all the others in the group to be informed and take action in real time.

David Cockburn

## Bees Abroad in Zambia

Those of you who attended our November 2019 meeting will know that Stuart Andrews, one of our long-standing members, is a project manager for Bees Abroad, and looks after a programme in a rural part of Zambia. He's recently written an update (with some very positive news) on the Monze project, which you can read on Bees Abroad's website - link [here](#).



### **Mission Statement:**

To further and promote the craft of beekeeping

To advance the education of the public in the importance of bees in the environment.

**The unified voice of British Beekeeping**

## POSITIVE THINKING MAY 2020

From Margaret Wilson, President of BBKA

We are still all in the grip of this dreadful disease but hopefully on the way out of the worst of it, God willing.

Our next (BBKA) committee meetings will be held using IT technology. I have already been involved in such meetings within branches and businesses, it is an option, but not as good as sitting face to face with discussions flowing freely, however, it keeps the wheels turning.

One item I have been asked to highlight is about swarming. A member wrote to the office asking for us to make people aware that in the current situation, it is very important that we keep swarming under control.

Weekly inspections must be maintained and we must all keep our eyes open for the early signs that the bees are getting ready; this means more drones in the hive and perhaps more than a couple of play cups, over-crowding, where the pheromones are not getting into all corners and where there is no room for the queen to lay her eggs. Even a failing queen, where there are not as many eggs being laid as you would expect at this time of year. As a beekeeper we should all be able to identify these signs and then act upon them by any of the methods available for swarm control, (we have a special issue on this subject if needed, orders are still being dispatched from the office staff).

It means taking that extra time during your inspection, making sure that the bees are not hiding a queen cell in a corner, or on the edge of the frame.

The lock-down came at a really bad time as far as we beekeepers are concerned. My own branch had quite a few people signed up for its Beginners Course which should have been held in April. We did not want to let them down, as I am sure no other branch does, so I thought I would share our solution with you.

Thankfully, we have a member on our committee who is well versed in anything which involves computers. He organised a 'Hang Out meeting' for our beginners and we provided a full days learning for those able to take it. We had 18 new beekeepers and 5 committee members on the session, so we were able to answer questions in the breaks from any of the new beekeepers. Our education manager had provided a fully comprehensive power point presentation, offered in four units with breaks in between and it worked very well. The questionnaire at the end of the session was very complimentary.

We cannot of course, currently offer practical sessions but will do so as soon as possible and each new beekeeper is provided with a mentor so they always have someone to contact and to help setting up their hives when they do get bees.

It was very successful, and the system used was free, so no reason for others not to take advantage.

We are also using a similar system to have the BBKA meetings. We have successfully managed the Standing Orders and Governance, Communication, Education and Husbandry committees, before the EC next week, with of course, others to follow. I will give you an update on anything new in the next letter.

I have been asked to remind everyone about the BBKA Forum as a useful place for discussing beekeeping <https://bbkaforum.co.uk/> the popularity of this medium for information is very popular among beekeepers.

Meanwhile, the sun is shining, my own bees are loving it and it is a pleasure to see them so active. Hopefully, they have done a good job on my

orchard and I will have a bumper harvest, yet again.

Please take care of yourselves, I know that quite a large proportion of 'us beekeepers' are in the vulnerable bracket, so stay safe and look after yourself, as well as your bees of course.

## POSITIVE THINKING JUNE 2020

From Margaret Wilson, President of BBKA

What a heat wave we have all had in the past couple of weeks. After all the cold and windy days, it was lovely to have sunshine wall to wall, although it was getting rather too hot for me in the end. However, my bees seemed to enjoy every minute and certainly the supers are very heavy, so a good crop of honey, I hope.

Our Chair, Anne Rowberry, suggested a 'question page' on our web site; this is to raise awareness of various issues and we hope that you will be able to benefit from it.

The first of these is about whether the wax moth was a problem last year. So please log on to:

<https://www.bbbk.org.uk/questions-for-beekeepers>

We will add questions each month and would welcome your comments and/or experiences. Thankfully, here in the North West, we do not have much wax moth, but you never know what each new year will bring, so it is good to be prepared.

Fundraising has of course affected the BBKA. If you shop online and use Amazon, the BBKA will benefit from you using the 'Amazon Smile' site. This is an identical site but allows you to choose a charity to which Amazon donates a small percentage of the total spent. You will find the BBKA on there and all donations from 'Amazon Smile' will be gratefully received, thank you.

We would also like to give a big thank you to all beekeepers collecting swarms. We have had several generous donations from satisfied householders, below are just some of the comments left on our donations page.

*"A huge thank you to Phil for arriving within half an hour to remove a large swarm from our tree."*

*"Thank you for the advice from Richard somewhere near Bromley, Kent, who reassured me about the bees' nest in my garden and offered to help if the nest did not go away. It did."*

Can I remind everyone again about the BBKA Forum as a useful place for discussing beekeeping <https://bbkaforum.co.uk/>. The use of this medium

for information is proving to be very popular among beekeepers.

The recent session of committee meetings were held using IT technology and we managed to get all the meetings done in this way. It's certainly not the same as face-to-face and having the time to talk informally to other trustees and staff at Stoneleigh, but at least it has meant that we have been able to carry on. One benefit is that there were no expenses for travel or accommodation so that has helped with the finances.

There is now a skeleton staff working from the office with others still working at home. Some others are on furlough, but with no exams or training sessions, the workload in that area is more or less non-existent at the moment.

It will be so good to get back to normal with our education programmes but of course we have to be sure that everything can be done safely.

Stay safe, look after yourselves, with the easing of the lock down it would be so easy to forget some of the safety precautions that we still need to do to keep this disease at bay.

Take care,

Margaret Wilson.

## ASIAN HORNET UPDATE

Some of you may have seen this article - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment-52896891/asian-hornet-uk-beekeepers-on-lookout-for-bee-eater> - on the BBC website on 3<sup>rd</sup> June. There has also been a likely sighting of a primary AH nest in Monmouthshire

(<https://www.bbka.org.uk/news/plausible-sighting-of-asian-hornet-on-uk-mainland-in-2020>).

Please find below a message from Sam Day, our Kent BKA AH team co-ordinator. If you are interested to follow up, contact our local team members at

[hornet@canterburybeekeepers.org.uk](mailto:hornet@canterburybeekeepers.org.uk)

I know we're living in troubled times at the moment but we really do need as many eyes looking for these insects as possible if we're to keep our bees and pollinators safe.

From Sam:

Want to do something meaningful that complies with social distancing guidelines and also helps protect our pollinators? Of course you do!

PTO for more information:

Please consider becoming an Asian hornet trap monitor. The necessary materials can easily be sourced. All we ask is that you monitor this trap daily - ideally releasing any caught insects at least twice a day when the weather is as hot as it has been recently. You will need to make sure you are confident in being able to ID an Asian hornet - although if you're unsure about a particular insect, help will only be a text/ email/ whatsapp away. You could always consider brushing up on your Asian hornet knowledge by taking the (very easy) BBKA Asian hornet online test.

The principle for the monitoring traps is simple: at this time of year, the nest is unlikely to contain many workers - therefore if you catch an Asian hornet, it is quite likely to be a queen (at the moment). Catching them now is critical as once the queen has been removed, the nest will perish. Even if worker hornets are caught (they look the same, just smaller) it will give the NBU as much time as possible to locate the nest and destroy it - hopefully before any significant damage has occurred to local pollinator populations. As hornets are unlikely to be found in the apiary just yet, you can position this trap wherever is most convenient to you (e.g. back garden).

The trap needs a miniature 'wick station' (small jar filled with attractant and a j-cloth protruding from a hole in the lid). This is to prevent any insects drowning, but still be able to get nourishment whilst in captivity. The wick station is housed inside a bottle trap - as per NBU specifications. The inverted top of the bottle makes a funnel which insects struggle to exit from. Exit holes punched around the sides of the bottle allow both the scent of the attractant, and smaller insects to escape. However, some insects may not find these holes - or be too large to pass through, e.g. European hornet, and some moth species. This is why it is critical that the trap is checked and emptied as often as possible.



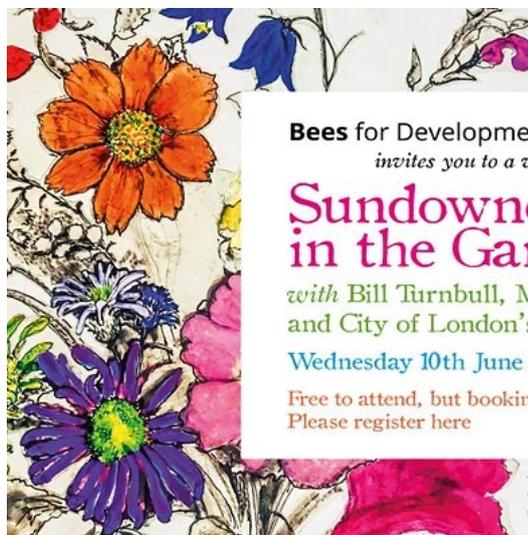
## Bees for Development Fundraising

Bees for Development are delighted to be hosting some online fun and entertainment with our Charity's Patrons: Bill Turnbull, Monty Don and Martha Kearney.

You are invited to join them on Wednesday 10 June, from 6.00 to 6.40pm. Bill and Martha will be hosting, with a number of guests including Monty Don and the City of London's Lady Mayoress, Hilary Russell. We encourage you to bring your own cocktail to the party! We will be holding an online auction with some wonderful items for you to bid on.

Including "Ask Monty"

More information at [this link](#)



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