



CANTERBURY BEEKEEPERS



A branch of Kent Beekeepers Association

EDITORS MESSAGE

Longer days are coming at last and even though the days are still cold and short... things are stirring in the hives!

The increased activity due to the mild winter means our bees have been chomping their way through their stores and I'm sure you are checking your hives to ensure your bees have sufficient food, adding fondant as needed.

There's not much forage about yet, but, with the hazel now in flower, early pollen is currently available, however, once this valuable pollen feast has gone you might want to consider feeding with pollen patties to ensure plenty of protein for brood production.

There's lots of jobs to do in preparation for the spring, having enough frames being high on the list as there never seems to be enough just when you need them! Checking supplies, and water availability near the hives, along with trimming and pruning around the apiary. However, if like me you prefer to be inside making (and eating) comfort food, then the 'Honey Steam Pudding' recipe might be more your style on page four!

The BBKA has published its Spring Convention, this year returning to a face to face event at Harper Adams University near Telford. I noticed in the workshop programmes that Julie Coleman - Master beekeeper, from Whitstable and Herne Bay Beekeepers, who often helps our club with basic assessments is running three workshops:

- Introduction to the BBKA Basic Assessment
- Preparing for the BBKA Basic Assessment
- Introduction to BBKA Microscopy Assessment.

Julie is also the education officer for our Kent Beekeepers Association (KBKA).

In addition, John Hendrie, also from the KBKA will be running two workshops:

- Introduction to BBKA general Husbandry
- Introduction to BBKA Certificate in Bee Health.

It's great to see the flag being flown from our own Kent expert practitioners.

Booking for lectures, workshops and accommodation opens on the 31st January, make sure you book early to avoid disappointment.

Lisa

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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.

JANUARY 2022

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

2022 YEAR PROGRAMME

02 FEBRUARY 2022

Managing your hives in winter

Branch Meeting to be held at Littlebourne Village Hall [Map of Littlebourne Village Hall, Littlebourne, Canterbury, Kent, United Kingdom. \(scale: 17\) \(danceweb.co.uk\)](#)

This last year has been particularly challenging for our bees and this variable winter hasn't made life any easier for them. In general terms Varroa counts have been high and winter stores have been depleted. During this meeting we will exchange views, provide advice and explore ways to help our bees through the remains of winter and ensure we give them the best possible kick start to a strong spring.

02 MARCH 2022

Q&A for new beginners and mentors

Branch Meeting to be held at Littlebourne Village Hall

It's not been an easy last two years for any new or aspiring beekeepers with limited contact available to support in the day to day practicalities of having bees. This is an opportunity for novice and fledgling beekeepers to come and ask all those questions that have been hard to answer on your own. It's also an invitation to our more experienced members who would like to support and mentor a new beekeeper to come along and introduce themselves.

We're anticipating a lively session with lots of advice and support for all!

06 APRIL 2022

Branch Meeting to be held at Littlebourne Village Hall

Agenda to be advised later.

SUPPORT FOR THE CLUB

WINTER WORK IN THE APIARY – Volunteers needed at our Palmstead Apiary. If you are available to do a branch "barn raising" activity, with building during February, please drop an email to Adrian (chairman@canterburybeekeepers.org.uk) to express interest in this project. Whether you are a skilled tradesperson, architect, or just a willing DIYer or tea-maker, we'd like your help!

BRANCH APIARY MANAGER NEEDED

Andy King has done a fabulous job as our Apiary Manager, maintaining and improving the stock and equipment during his time, using his creative and woodworking skills in much restoration and replacement of broken hives and stands for the clubs benefit. Sadly for us, Andy will be moving to an intensive new role in January and will no longer have the time to devote to the branch apiary. We are therefore looking for volunteers to look after the branch Apiary. If you would like to discuss this role further, please contact Adrian (chairman@canterburybeekeepers.org.uk)



BRANCH NEWS

Size Matters – Dr Andy King

We're in this business because we like bees: the more bees the merrier. We max out the number of colonies and then, when we're short of space, max out the size of the colonies too, taking particular delight in colonies which are on double brood, or even better double 14*12. This is, of course, excellent for honey, when the weather is fine and the nectar flow is strong.

Forty years ago, an academic at Aberdeen, Jeffree dared to ask the question of whether you can ever have too many bees, particularly in the context of over-wintering. He observed that bees on the periphery of the cluster cannot have a temperature below 45F (7C), otherwise they become immobile. However, the temperature gradient across a winter cluster is invariably 8F per inch, therefore a large cluster with a radius of 8 inch (of approximately 45,000 bees) would have an internal temperature of 109F (42C)! Thus a very large colony must shed bees for over-wintering, which is hardly resource efficient. Whether we convinced, or not, by this logic, many of us have taken nucs into the winter, only to find that they have built up surprisingly fast the following spring.

The scourge of varroa reached our shores a whole decade after Jeffree did his work on over-wintering, and in one very real sense these mites have upped the ante for large colonies. As Autumn turns to Winter, a colony will contract, as they always have, but now, in tandem, the density of mites will increase over what little brood remains. This effect is magnified on larger colonies, where contraction rate is higher, as I have found out this year in my out apiary where I've been running colonies on 2 and a half, triple brood and even 3 and a half.

At home, I typically run on one and a half, sometime double brood as super-strong colonies are not conducive to sipping Pimm's or supervising PhD students in the

back-garden. I use the same treatment strategy for mites both at home and in my out apiary: shock swarm early in the season if a colony is looking dodgy (a form of beekeeping mayhem which works for me), followed by MAQS or Apiguard late summer, followed by ApiBioxal in the second or third week of December. It has all worked fine up now, but this year, my three largest colonies in my out apiary all succumbed to death by varroa. I opened them up for trickle-treatment only to find that there was practically nothing there. I was gutted. It was a rubbish end to a rubbish year.

I was puzzled at first because the smallest colony in my out apiary, on one box of brood, was fine. This single box is all that remains of another large colony that I split the week before the "summer of rain" and consequently the queen failed to mate. This colony therefore had to through a prolonged brood-break while another queen was raised. This would have artificially knocked back the mites, which is presumably why the colony was in good shape when I opened them up for trickling.



So New Year's day found me undertaking a post-mortem in our glorified garden-shed that we call the summer house (where we have artificial light). Sure enough the empty cells that once contained brood were peppered with the tell-tell spots of white guano left by the mites (see the pictures). Fiddling with mite

faeces was strangely satisfying as least I knew that my bees died from nothing worse.

So what should I have done? I should have split my large colonies late summer into smaller units which would have also given the bees a brood-break (bees have a natural urge for supersedure then anyway). Then MAQS or Apiguard would have knocked back the mites even further. I would have done this if I was counting mites, but of course I wasn't: life is too short.

So my New Year's resolution is to properly monitor twice each year: once in the spring and once in later summer. I would be unrealistic to attempt anything more. I'll also break down my large colonies for over-wintering because this year I've learned an important lesson that is with bees, sometimes you really can have too much of a good thing.

Honey Steamed pudding recipe

As seen in series two, episode seven of Rick's Stein's Cornwall on BBC2. Rick spent time on the Scilly Islands looking at local bees and the beekeepers efforts to improve their stock, as whilst the bees are Varroa free, they don't maintain strong colonies.

Rick's steamed sponge pudding recipe is a comforting classic and is made with honey from the islands.



Serves 8

Ingredients

- 175g butter, softened + extra for greasing
- 175g light muscovado sugar
- 1 Tbsp honey

- 3 large eggs
- 175g self raising flour

For the sauce

- 50g butter
- 100g light muscovado sugar
- 150g honey
- 150ml double cream
- Ice cream to serve.

Method

Generously grease a 1L pudding basin with butter. Cream the butter and sugar together until light and fluffy, beat in the honey, beat in the eggs one at a time, add a spoonful of flour with the last egg, fold in the remaining flour. Cover with a pleated sheet of greased foil and tie in place with string.

Steam for 2 hours, in a steaming basket over a pan of boiling water, lid on, topping up the steamer with boiling water if required.

Make the butterscotch sauce by placing all the ingredients but the cream in a pan over a low heat stirring until all the ingredients have melted and combined, stir in the double cream and keep warm.

Uncover the pudding and carefully run a knife around the edge of the basin to loosen and cover with an inverted plate and turn out.

Serve in wedges with the honey butterscotch and Cornish ice cream and more honey as required.

Information from our branch secretary - Jan Soetaert

The South East Region Annual Report can be viewed by clicking the following link:
https://canterburybeekeepers.org.uk/2022/01/2021_south_east_annual_report/

Updated syllabus for BBKA module Exams for 2022

The updated syllabi are available on the BBKA website alongside updated reading lists: <https://www.bbka.org.uk/modules>

And Finally... from around the world!

A Honey Buzzard flying away with a huge chunk of comb - Sri Lanka



Another fun fact, they're the only known predator of the Giant Asian Hornet (aside from humans), and they are armed with sting-resistant feathers that protect them from the attacks of their prey. In fact, the feathers have a natural repellent that lessens the risk of being swarmed by the hornets.

Pollen Bundles



The photo shows various pollen bundles, packed by the bees into the cells of their comb. The pollen, mixed with some enzymes from the bees and a bit of nectar, will ferment into "bee bread." Later, nurse bees will convert this into nourishment for the very young bees.

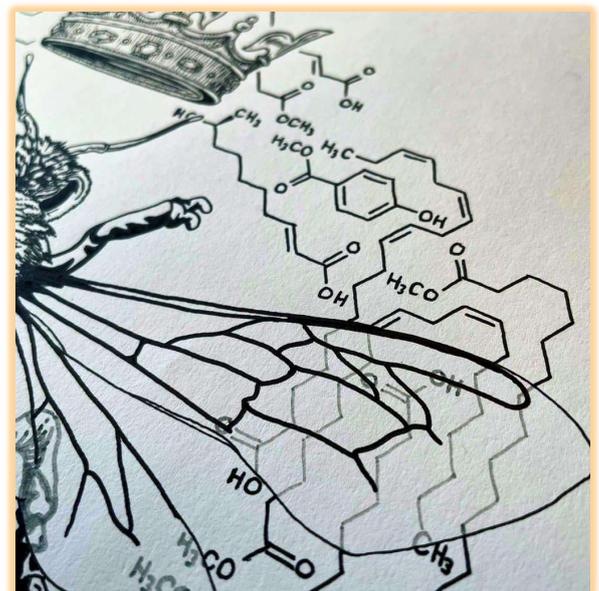
<https://beeologique.com/>

Phil Knutson North Carolina

A Chemist and Artist who combines his two passions.



Picture of bee surrounded by her pheromones.



Close up of the det