

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

October 2018

Editor: Mary Staffurth

Tel: 01732 462931 or e-mail: marystaffurth@yahoo.com

Branch website: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>

Strong Turnout at Honey Show



Enid Brown judging the mead classes. Photo by Pauline Hayward.

The Honey Show this year was quite an event. Firstly, it was a huge honour to welcome Enid Brown as the judge. She is one of the leading judges within BBKA, and made some really insightful observations on the presentation of entries. Secondly, we had 88 entries, with a great turn out from our new members. Miss Brown was particularly complimentary about the effort made by our less experienced beekeepers.

Paul Abbott won a special award of merit for the best overall entry, his sweet mead. Paul was also the most successful competitor overall with 12 first prizes. He won almost all of the honey classes, the two mead classes, own design of label, two containers of cut comb and the two candle classes.

Richard Rose won for two jars of medium honey. In the novice classes Belinda Thorkildsen won with her liquid honey and Vanessa Jones came first in the set honey. Cliff and Pauline Hayward won firsts with their moulded beeswax and wax blocks and their photograph. John Farrow won with his item of beekeeping paraphernalia and Barrwood Apiary came first in the class for a frame of honey for extraction.

Top tips from Miss Brown:-

1. Jars and lids must all match and be absolutely spotless. Take a clean tea towel with you to polish any finger prints off the jars when you are setting out your entries.
2. Be very careful about filling jars to the correct level.
3. Clean the rim of the jar, and use a piece of cling film to remove any surface debris. Check the INSIDE of the lid is clean, so you don't drop debris on the surface from the lid.
4. Make sure labels are all square and level, you are looking for a very neat appearance.
5. Set and soft set honey should not slump when the jar is tipped over. You are looking for a dry matte surface.
6. Keep the honey warm to reduce granulation. Many people had problems with granulation this year, possibly due to the weather.
7. Filter the honey carefully, and make sure you have allowed time for air bubbles to settle out. An LED torch will help you spot any bits in the jar.
8. Wax needs to be carefully weighed, the weight and dimensions are checked during judging.
9. Filter wax carefully, no visible bits!
10. Keep practising. Do not be afraid to be different with the photography or best gadget class, you can catch the judges' eye with something fun or interesting rather than technical accuracy.

Liz Birchenough

Bees at the Garden Centre

On the afternoon of Sunday 9th September Sue Knights, Margaret Everest and I spent the afternoon at Notcutts Garden Centre in Pembury. We were there to talk with the visitors about beekeeping and supporting pollinators in the environment. Many visitors were sympathetic to the message, and were trying to use pollinator friendly planting in their gardens, although some were concerned their gardens were too small to be useful. We did try to emphasise that every little helps, and don't forget a shallow bird bath.

Margaret had brought her poly nuc along with a number of frames at different stages: a new one, a part drawn one, one with capped honey. This proved very popular with the young families.

We also handed out a number of information leaflets about the branch, and we had some enquiries about talks to schools and other groups. Wearing our beesuits did attract some attention, as did our roller banner although we had to tie this firmly to the fence and wedge it in place with a chair.

This proved to be an interesting and rewarding afternoon. The staff at the garden centre were helpful and supportive and would welcome another visit maybe in the springtime.

We are going to have a similar session at Hadlow Garden centre on a Sunday afternoon. If anyone is interested in coming along, please contact me.

Liz Birchenough



Chatting to the customers at Notcutts in Pembury. Photo by Liz Birchenough

Planting for Bees

Garden centres were mentioned in the first of our Autumn and Winter indoor talks. Dr Karin Alton, from Sussex University, said her research has found that they are not as good for pollinators as you might think. Pelargoniums, for example, are so highly bred that little pollen or nectar remains. The same is true of other bedding plants, so her advice is to buy perennials instead. If you want to see which plants the bees like then go shopping for plants on a sunny day. Karin highlighted the UK's loss of bees because of agricultural intensification, urbanisation, climate change and pests and diseases. This makes it all the more important for pollinators to have sources of forage for example on farm buffer strips, on road verges and in our gardens. Experimental flower beds have been planted at the university to monitor their attractiveness to pollinators. Open dahlias, lavender, borage, salvia and anise hyssop were all popular with bees.

Karin said that nothing is allowed into her garden unless it is good for bees or edible. Her tips for your own garden are:

Do not use insecticide

Grow lots of different plants to cover the season

Have a natural (untidy) corner

If you missed the meeting and want to learn more about bee-friendly plants, you can go to Karin's website:

<http://www.flowerscapes.org.uk/home/4587861222>

Mary Staffurth

Branch Website

You can click on the link <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/> or you can simply search for Sevenoaks beekeepers in Google and our lovely new site will come up.

This is a link to the latest county newsletter including a warning about making sure your bees have enough stores going into the winter:

<http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/KBKA-Newsletter-Sep-2018.pdf>

Know Your Hornets



A European Hornet. Photo by Sarah Rapley.

Have you noticed hornets around your beehives this summer? John Farrow saw European hornets around some of his hives for the first time this year. He spotted one joining the bees and wasps in cleaning up some wax cappings that he had put in the garden.

Sarah Rapley also noticed a lot of European hornets this year, including a nest in the soffit.

Peter Hutton explains their behaviour:

This is a European worker Hornet, 38mm long (1 1/2") they will hawk honeybees at the end of the season, when honey bees are cleaning up cappings or old comb containing honey. From my observations over several years, I see them take wasps (their cousins). Just recently I have seen one hornet knock down another; their immediate reaction was to fight other so I assume they were from different colonies. In the past they have reacted quite differently as if they came from the same colony.

Queens are 55mm long.

Asian hornets are a different matter because they are a threat to bees. In September Asian hornet nests were found and destroyed in Fowey, in Cornwall and in New Alresford, in Hampshire.

There have been seven sightings this year and you can find all the locations on the BBKA Asian Hornet Map www.bbka.org.uk/asian-hornet-map

Diary Dates

Tuesday 16 October at Sevenoaks Weald Memorial Hall at 7.30pm: Paul Vagg has been invited to talk about cooking with honey following an entertaining workshop he led at the National Honey Show last year.

Saturday 13th October at 10am to 3pm at Axminster Sittingbourne Store ME9 8QP: (Peter Hutton writes:) Medway Beekeepers Association has arranged a combination of promoting beekeeping and construction of bee hives in conjunction with the tool & machinery supplier Axminster on the A249 on the approach to Sheppey (Bobbing). This might be of interest to DIY Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells beekeepers. I use an Axminster nail gun for frame assembly. It makes light work of a tedious job. Follow the link for more details: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/sittingbourne-store-introduction-to-bee-keeping-with-medway-bee-keepers-association-tickets-49939264685>

Send any photos or articles for inclusion in the newsletter to Mary Staffurth: marystaffurth@yahoo.com