

# **KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH NEWSLETTER**

**November 2018**

Editor: Mary Staffurth

Tel: 01732 462931 or e-mail: [marystaffurth@yahoo.com](mailto:marystaffurth@yahoo.com)

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

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## **Spot the Queen at the Garden Centre**



On a rather cool and damp Sunday afternoon, Maggie Speirs and Liz Birchenough (accompanied by Maggie's lovely guide puppy in training, William) set up the branch display at Hadlow Garden Centre. As usual, we were trying to engage and inform the general public about beekeeping and supporting bees locally.

There were fewer customers than on our previous foray at Notcutts, but nonetheless William was a huge help in enticing the customers for a chat and a pat. We did get a good level of positive response from people, with one specific discussion about school presentations.

Maggie brought some A4 laminated photos of frames so that the children could have a go at spotting the queen, which they found quite tricky - I know that feeling! There was also interest in looking inside a nuc box to see what everything looked like close-up and, of course, everyone was willing to try our honey sample.

One individual seemed particularly pleased to see us but sadly, just when we thought we had a new member, he announced he had a large apiary, and was already belonged to Watlington branch!

It was pleasing to hear that most customers were sympathetic to reducing the use of insecticides in their gardens, and did have a good understanding of planting to support pollinators.

I think we need to plan a few more similar activities in early Spring next year, so if you think you could spare an afternoon to talk to people about beekeeping, please get in touch.

*Liz Birchenough*

## **Honey with Everything**

The possibilities for using your own honey for cooking are apparently endless. At our October meeting Paul Vagg talked about the properties of honey and its wide range of uses from baking cakes and glazing meat to enriching sauces and desserts. He likes honey for its browning and crisping qualities, as a flavour enhancer in teas, for its texture and feel as well as for retaining moisture in baking, for binding in puddings and for adding colour to sauces and desserts. He does not just rely on his own bees for honey but likes to buy honeys from around the world.

Paul's top tips:

- The easiest way to measure honey for cooking is to brush cooking oil on the inside of the jug or cup that you are going to use, measure the honey, and it will slide off very easily.
- Extract a frame of ivy honey from your hive, freeze it in an ice cube tray and use a cube at a time to add to a sauce.

His favourite recipe is Honey and Lemon Drizzle Cake, closely followed by Bee Sting Cake. You can see Paul's recipes by going to <https://www.bee-naturals.co.uk>

*Mary Staffurth*

## To Feed or Not to Feed?

I overwinter my bees on two brood boxes, which normally gets them through the winter. However, there was a quiet period before the ivy came into flower, so I wondered whether I should try feeding some fondant.

Even though my bees have been foraging furiously over the past few weeks, presumably mostly on the flowering ivy, I debated whether it was necessary to feed them.

It is always said that a picture paints a thousand words and this one shows how the bees immediately covered the fondant after the first few seconds of being given this 2.5 kg pack.

NB: A good way to purchase fondant is to Google local bakers. However, if you do not have any friendly bakers nearby, you could easily make a super alternative if you have some spare honey available. Mix this with some Tate & Lyle granulated white sugar into a smooth paste, put it in a plastic bag and put slits in as per the photo.



Alternatively spread it onto a sheet of newspaper over the queen excluder and put another sheet on top to prevent it drying out too quickly.

You will find the bees adore this honey/sugar mixture.

*John Farrow*

## Beekeeping in Retirement

On 1st October, John Farrow and I attended the "Older People Can" event at The Stag in Sevenoaks. The purpose of the gathering was to put retired residents in touch with a range of activities in the local area. More than 150 people attended the event. The beekeeping display roused much interest, and we sold some of our honey stock. We have a couple of potential new members, and we have been invited to address a meeting of the senior lunch club at Bessels Green Baptist Church.

*Liz Birchenough*

## On the Web

To find our website you can click on the link <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/> or you can simply search for Sevenoaks beekeepers in Google and our site will come up. It is constantly being updated with information and links. For example, there is an update on the Asian hornet: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/asian-hornet-uk-sightings-in-2018>

There is also a link to a Youtube video telling you all you need to know about varroa:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DK2Xi0ST4rA>

## Bee Suits

BBwear say they are currently selling bee suits with their old logos at a 30% discount. Their website is [www.bbwear.co.uk](http://www.bbwear.co.uk)

## November Meeting

**Tuesday November 20** at Sevenoaks Weald Memorial Hall at 7.30pm: Club AGM and prize-giving.

Please send any articles or photos for the newsletter to Mary Staffurth: [marystaffurth@yahoo.com](mailto:marystaffurth@yahoo.com)