

KENT BEEKEEPERS' ASSOCIATION SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BRANCH NEWSLETTER

December 2018

Editor: Mary Staffurth

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

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

Christmas cracker joke. Q: What bee can never be understood?

Christmas Social

The Christmas Social Evening and Supper will be held at The Bucks Head, Godden Green TN15 0JJ on Wednesday 12th December from 7pm. Please contact Sarah Rapley to confirm attendance by email sarah@chartcorner.com or phone/text 07970 484232.

Beginners Training Day

The Branch will hold a training day for members who are new to beekeeping on March 3. It will cover topics such as the equipment needed, siting an apiary, and the life cycle of the honey bee. It is aimed at complete beginners but those with some experience might also find it useful. There will be a small charge to cover teaching materials.

News from the Annual General Meeting

Membership and Money

The annual meeting provided an opportunity to hear about the health of the Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells branch. Our Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Liz Birchenough, reported that membership stayed stable with new members replacing those who had left. However, she said we needed to continue to attract new members to the branch. She underlined the importance of the website, which will often be the first port of call for any prospective member, and the value of attending and holding public events. The branch finances are healthy, with a trading profit last year of £252. There is also about £4,000 in the bank. Liz said that because the money was earning little interest she had come up with some ideas and developed a spending plan to benefit the branch and attract new members:

- 1/ Extending the outreach programme by attending garden centres and giving talks to schools and clubs. The cost will be minimal.
- 2/ Holding an introductory training day for novices in March.
- 3/ Allocating an extra £500 to spend at our Barrwood and Hilbert Road apiaries. Both have had difficulties with bad tempered colonies so this could be used, for example, to buy in better tempered bees.
- 4/ Buying more extracting equipment so that it can be hired to members, for example table top extractors, uncapping trays and filter buckets. £300 has been allocated in the budget.
- 5/ Looking at other ways to sell branch honey to the public after the disappointing sales at the Kent Honey Show.

Branch Officers

All the branch officers were re-elected. President: Peter Hutton; Chairman: Cliff Hayward; Vice-Chairman: John Hendrie; Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Liz Birchenough; Secretary, Web Page Editor, Swarm Collector: John Farrow; Librarian, Web Page Editor, Swarm Collector: Sarah Rapley; Honey Show Secretary: Richard Rose. Paul Abbott is standing down as a committee member and being replaced by Sue Knights.

Barrwood and Hilbert Road

Neither of our apiaries has had permanent managers for some time, instead being run by a group of people. At Hilbert Road, Barry Chaseley, will be the co-ordinator for next year but will need support from others. At Barrwood, the group of beekeepers that has run the apiary for the past few seasons will continue to work together to make sure that all the meetings have leaders.

Certificates and Trophies

The Chairman's cup was awarded to Liz Birchenough for all her work as Treasurer, her recent pop-up events at several locations and setting up a Beginners Day. Certificates and cups were also presented to prize-winners from the branch honey show. Almost all the silverware went to Paul Abbot, who won most of the first prizes.



John Farrow collects a swarm

Anyone interested in being on the '2019 Swarms Request List' send your name, address, land line and mobile number to stweditor@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Or go to our website: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk> and click on the 'SWARMS' menu for full details.

Asian Hornet

One of our swarm collectors, Sarah Rapley, recently received an enquiry from a member of the public who was worried that hornets nesting on their property near Halstead, could be Asian hornets. As there was no identifying photo, Sarah did not want to mobilise the bee inspector without further investigation. Since Liz Birchenough was available, she visited the site to see if it would be possible to get a better identification. The nest was in a rotten tree stump on the edge of woodland. Unfortunately, it was too cold for any insects to be flying. However, after being shown the excellent photographs on the poster recently supplied with BBKA News, the householders confirmed that the insects were almost certainly European hornets. Liz thanked the householders for their vigilance and commended them for their prompt and correct action in alerting the branch for advice.

Liz says: "It is really important to remember that this was absolutely not a waste of time, because at some point someone will find the first Asian hornet in our part of Kent. We all need to be on our guard, and need to encourage and support everyone to keep their eyes open, and we need to actively respond to all possible sightings in our area."



If you haven't already checked your bees' stores it might be an idea to do so. As Sarah Rapley's pictures show, her colonies had all but finished their first block of fondant in November.



Plastic packaging for our magazines

I am sure you are all aware of the environmental impact of plastic packaging. Both our magazines (BBKA News and Beecraft) are delivered in plastic wallets. I have been in touch with both publications to enquire if alternative compostable materials have been considered. Both publications are looking carefully at new materials, but are aware of cost and overseas posting issues. At present, there are no plans to change the packaging, but don't forget you can order Beecraft electronically which is also £5 cheaper than the paper option. The plastic wrappers should be recyclable at supermarkets with plastic bag recycling, so this is an option for the time being.

Liz Birchenough

On Our Website

Click on the link <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/> or simply search for Sevenoaks beekeepers in Google. Among the new items are two YouTube videos posted under 'WEB WATCH' and both with stunning close up pictures (*writes John Farrow*).

The first <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-tqiaPoS2U> [6 min] is a project for National Geographic. It gives a glimpse into a bee hive and reveals one of the biggest threats to its health, the varroa mite that preys on baby bees in the first 21 days of life. With this incredible footage, it shows the problem and what is being done to solve it.

The second <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tcXkQBY0i0k> [12.36 min] is Honeybee Democracy, presented by Margaret Couvillon. She is a biologist at the University of Sussex where she studied the uses of the unique waggle dance to investigate honey bee foraging for nectar, pollen, resin and new nesting sites.

Missing Library Books

Our library has a large selection of titles covering every aspect of beekeeping. Contact our librarian, Sarah Rapley, to borrow a book: sarah@chartcorner.com Some of our library books are missing so if you have one sitting, forgotten, on a shelf, please return it to Sarah. The missing titles are:

Basic Beekeeping // Breeding Better Bees: using simple modern methods by J E Dews & E Milner //

Breeding techniques and selection for breeding of the by Friedrich Ruttner. // Managing Varroa by DEFRA //

The Healthy Hive by BBKA // The Honey Handbook by Kim Flottum // The pollen loads of the Honeybee by Dorothy Hodges

Christmas Cracker Joke. A: A mumble-bee

Please send any articles or photos for the newsletter to Mary Staffurth: marystaffurth@yahoo.com