

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2020

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SEPTEMBER MEETING

Unfortunately, we have decided that we will have to cancel the September meeting. We are working with the organisers at Weald Memorial Hall to see how we can manage future meetings. We will keep you informed of progress.

Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary and Treasurer

THE HONEY HARVEST



Philip Runacres and Tim Johnston hard at work extracting the Barrwood honey

Barrwood Apiary

Philip Runacres and I extracted a little over 83lbs out of three supers and a brood (not all frames were full by any means). We used the club's stainless steel 9 frame manual radial for the supers but the brood frames needed a different extractor so we ended up with two to clean afterwards.

Tim Johnston

Hilbert Road Apiary

The extraction work party for the Hilbert Road harvest met on a day when Kent experienced some of its highest August temperatures. Vic Webb and Robin Toop had previously done all the preparation to get the bees cleared from the supers. On the morning of August 7th, Vic met Tania Kennedy and me at Hilbert Rd, where we loaded his van with the supers and extractor for the short drive around the corner to the McNroys' kitchen. James and Julie-Ann had done a wonderful job clearing space and putting plastic sheeting on the floors so we could get started straight away. Steph McMahon joined us to help with the uncapping. We had sufficient space to set up a small production line without getting too close to each other. It was very warm so honey was flowing quite freely, and we were finished by early afternoon.

The volume produced was down compared with last year, which was to be expected given the very dry weather over the past couple of months. However, we had a good crop, which we allowed to settle before filtering and bottling. The honey this year is a lovely dark amber colour with a great rich flavour.

Thanks to everyone for helping, especially the McNroys for allowing us to invade their kitchen, and keeping us supplied with cold drinks during the day.
Liz Birchenough

BRANCH HONEY FOR SALE

The 2020 harvest is now available to you. The honey is liquid, and has a very intense flavour. The Hilbert Road honey has a slightly floral note, while the Barrwood honey has a caramel flavour. Please note that if you are purchasing the honey as gifts for friends or family, you should remind the recipients that the honey is unpasteurised, and therefore unsuitable for infants under 12 months, or expectant mothers.

Hilbert Road honey is available in 16oz jars at £6.50.

Barrwood honey is available in 12oz jars at £5.

As always, there are some unused jars left over, so these are available to members who need a few jars at 50p each. The jars are brand new from Freeman and Harding, with matching gold coloured lids.

Please contact membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk to arrange collection and payment.

Liz Birchenough

LEARNING TO KEEP BEES

If you are new to beekeeping there is no better way to learn than by helping at our teaching apiaries, as the Hilbert Road Apiary manager, Vic Webb, explains:

I would like to thank Robin Toop and Tania Kennedy for their help and labour at Hilbert Road, and Peter Hutton for his valuable technical advice from time to time and whenever asked.

Tania is in her first year of beekeeping. I supplied her with a swarm and she has had quite a crash course of practical beekeeping at Hilbert Road. As well as supplying her labour and support she has had practical experience lighting and using a smoker; assembling and inspecting hives; using a hive tool; looking at different patterns of brood; identifying brood at all stages; finding queen cells and introducing them to queenless colonies; uniting colonies with the use of newspaper; using the Snellgrove board; taking a swarm; learning how to feed bees with different types of feeders; how to keep records; how to make up a queen rearing nuc box; cleaning and assembling frames; scorching hive parts; varroa treatments; use of clearer boards. She has helped me immensely and she has, in her first year, taken a crop of honey from her own bees!

Vic Webb, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

NEW ARRIVALS AT CLUB APIARY

Early in August Tania Kennedy alerted me to a swarm about 80 yards from the Hilbert Road apiary, in a hedge by the pavement. One of our members has bees in the allotment close by and I suspect they were his, although there are a number of other beekeepers in the area. I am sure no swarm came out of Hilbert Road. Tania watched a swarm being taken for the first time and, fortunately, it went like clockwork: taking the hedge in a wrestler's grip, a quick sharp shake into a nucleus hive did the trick. Of course, it took about another three hours for the bees to all go in. I left them behind a hedge while I went off to play a game of bowls, like Francis Drake, and came back at 7.30pm. I donated the bees to the club apiary and we now have eight hives. We extracted from six. Robin Toop and I have made sure all hives are in good shape ready for the winter. In the past two weeks, I have fed 53 kilos of sugar made into syrup with added teaspoonfuls of "hive alive" to the colonies. I shall feed a further 26 plus kilos in the next two weeks and will also treat all hives for varroa.

Vic Webb, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

BEES IN THE BAY WINDOW



David Turner and I spent most of Sunday 23rd August removing two colonies of bees from this bay window roof. The bees had been in this roof space for several years and had not caused the owner any concerns but, because he was due to have some building work done, both he and the builders wanted the bees removed.

We used the bee-vac to remove the bees into two nucleus boxes and transferred the brood comb in there to keep them occupied. The comb with honey, we put into three very large containers with lids to prevent other bees in the area developing a robbing frenzy.

There were two colonies. We think the one on the left-hand side was the one that had swarmed in June and this was the reason why there were so few bees. The right-hand colony was much larger and we hoped we had got the queen but we were not certain as the bees were not doing their normal fanning at the entrance. If needed, we trust that they will draw down some queen cells from the recently laid eggs. If not, David will unite them with one of his weaker colonies.

Hopefully this is the last extraction this year, as time is running out for the colonies to build up sufficiently to survive the winter and David and I think we have had enough sticky mess to last us this year!!

The day's events are recorded on this pdf on our website under SWARMS/BEES IN BUILDINGS.

<https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Penshurst-Bay-Window-Extraction-DT.pdf>

John Farrow, Swarm Co-ordinator



MAKING A SPLASH AT HILBERT ROAD

I have purchased a small fountain for £189 and installed it at Hilbert Road Apiary. The fountain is only just over two feet high with a solar panel and back up batteries. It has many advantages: it is hygienic; it satisfies the need of the bees for clean water; because it is solar and battery powered the water is constant; it will reduce the need for the bees to travel to neighbours' gardens and to be a perceived nuisance; it will replace stagnant water in a sunken sink, which is breeding mosquitoes; it is attractive as a feature in the apiary. Tania has agreed to help me keep the water level topped up. There are various speeds of flow but the slow speed should be just right, allowing a trickle and not washing the bees away as if they were whitewater rafting.

Vic Webb, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

TAKE PART IN ASIAN HORNET WEEK

The British Beekeepers Association is asking everyone to look out for Asian Hornets in Asian Hornet Week 2020 from the 7th to the 13th of September. The BBKA wants beekeepers to put an hour aside every day to check their hives for hornets hanging in the air around the entrance - a behaviour known as hawking. It is also asking members of the public to keep their eyes open for them too. You can use your mobile to take a photo and download the Asian Hornet Watch app. For more details go to the BBKA website:

<https://www.bbka.org.uk/event/asian-hornet-week-2020>



HONEY IS BEST CURE FOR COLDS

Research suggests that honey is better for coughs and colds than many over the counter medicines. Scientists from Oxford University found that many Upper Respiratory Tract Infections (that is everything between the mouth and nose and the top of the lungs) respond better to honey than many medications. Honey has been a well-known home remedy for a long time, but this is the first formal medical study that has measured an improvement in symptoms, particularly coughs. More research is required before definitive conclusions can be published.

Writing in the journal BMJ Evidence Based Medicine, the authors stated: "Honey is a frequently used lay remedy that is well known to patients. It is cheap, easy to access and has limited harms. When clinicians wish to prescribe for URTI we would recommend honey as an alternative to antibiotics. Honey is more effective and less harmful than usual care alternatives and avoids causing harm through antimicrobial resistance."

You can download this paper free from the BMJ website: <https://ebm.bmj.com/content/early/2020/07/28/bmjebm-2020-111336>

Liz Birchenough

BEE-FRIENDLY PLANTS

Several members spotted a story on the BBC website about plans to ensure that people can buy plants that are good for pollinators. The Saving Pollinators logo scheme was developed after it was found many gardeners were unwittingly buying plants with residues poisonous to pollinators. The new labels guarantee eligible plants have not been treated with synthetic insecticides and are grown in peat free compost. For the full story, follow this link: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-53678798>

WASP ATTACKS

I would like to alert everyone to the wasp problem (*writes Vic Webb*). On August 30th in one of my apiaries a hive was being attacked remorselessly by wasps. Peter Hutton came over and as soon as he saw what was happening he took a saw to an entrance block and narrowed the entrance to one bee space. This still did not deter the invaders so it was decided to move the entire hive to his apiary to give it a rest for a few days and to let the wasps get used to the idea that the hive was not there to plunder. When I move it back I will put it on a slightly different stand.

Stay in touch with the beekeeping world by going to our website:

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

*Send any photos or items for the next newsletter to
marystaffurth@yahoo.com*