

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2020

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New Style AGM Hits the Mark

Our first AGM via Zoom was a great success. It was obviously not the same as being able to meet and chat with everyone else in the hall but it worked surprisingly well. John Hendrie masterminded the event and made the voting a simple affair that involved clicking yes, no or abstain on an automatically generated form that appeared on our computers. We had up to 21 people at the meeting at any time but some came and went during the Zoom call.

In his annual report, Cliff Hayward, the Branch Chairman said it was a shame that so many of the year's events and meetings had had to be cancelled. He highlighted the fact that our extensive beekeeping library has not been used enough and urged people to look at the book list on our website. <https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/information/library/>

The Branch Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Liz Birchenough, said that membership increased last year but the figures hid quite a large churn rate. She said it was likely that numbers would remain static or fall over the coming year. One major purchase during the year was a new projector. In the current year expenditure will include increased insurance for Hilbert Road Apiary and planned maintenance at Hilbert Road.

All the existing Branch officers were re-elected:

President: Peter Hutton
Chairman: Cliff Hayward
Vice-Chairman: John Hendrie
Secretary: John Farrow
Treasurer: Liz Birchenough

Committee Members:
Sarah Rapley
Vic Webb
Richard Rose
Sue Knights

Only one item was raised in Any Other Business. Tim Johnston suggested that following the relatively low honey harvest at Barrwood it would be a good idea to do an inventory of equipment. He said that damaged hive parts could be put aside to be repaired or discarded and the club could consider buying new items. Tim also volunteered to help. Cliff Hayward, who is the Barrwood Apiary Manager, welcomed the idea. He said that some equipment had been donated, which would help, and he would welcome any volunteers.

This year, of course, there was no honey show so there were no cups or certificates to be awarded save for one: The Chairman's Cup. It went to Liz Birchenough, who Cliff praised for all her hard work behind the scenes.

Mary Staffurth

Winter in the Apiary

This year is clearly different in so many ways (*writes Branch President, Peter Hutton*). As my wife and I work daily on the farm we see these minute changes first hand. Winter flowering cherries are now in flower two months early, we are seeing violets starting to flower and snowdrops pushing upward. Rarely a day goes by without some of our bees bringing in pollen while the majority are managing to find some nectar - unless they are robbing deceased colonies. Wasps are nearly gone. It could be Spring. Today (Saturday 28 November) the bees have been flying strongly from 10 o'clock.

Undertake a Varroa drop count now over a 48-hour period. If you find Varroa, then use an oxalic acid treatment to knock out the remaining Varroa as the bees go into their quiescent stage.

If you have woodland nearby then you must protect your hives against green woodpeckers; they attack the hives once frost hardens the ground and stops them getting worms to eat. They cause so much damage to cedar hives and completely ruin polystyrene hives. You can purchase rolls of thin weldmesh wire from Toolstation or Screwfix, mesh size 1" x 1/2" and 30 metres long. Use some 2" x 3" wood for framework all around and above the hives. Staple the wire on the outside of the frame; this will keep the birds away from the hive surfaces. Make the top easy to lift off or open so you can feed the bees with some candy should they run short of winter stores.

Starvation is the main reason for winter losses followed by viruses and then queenlessness. Did you remove the queen excluder when you left a super of honey above for the bees to consume during the winter? If you did not remove it then do not be surprised to find your queen dead below the excluder.

Colin Ellis

It is with great sadness that we report the death of Colin Ellis, who had been a member of the branch for several years. Colin died following an accident at the beginning of November.

Search for the Perfect Bee

Our December talk, entitled 'I want the best bee!' will be given via Zoom by Anne Rowberry, Chairman of BBKA and a Master Beekeeper. She will cover the characteristics of the main races of bee found in the UK, giving their advantages and problems. The issues concerning importing bees and breeding your own queens will also be discussed. This will be useful for those starting beekeeping, to help them decide which strain will be best for them. The talk will be on Tuesday 15 December at 7.30 pm. Members will receive the Zoom link via email.



Equipment for Sale

Bee hive and beekeeping kit for sale.
Complete package for someone looking to start beekeeping.
Hive is 18" square in size.
Kit includes smoker, Apiguard, small suit, adult suit, gloves xs and medium, 1 pair sleeves, honey collecting buckets.
There is likely to be more kit in the bags.
Cost over £500 new. Asking £260 for the whole lot.

Call Jane on 07834 611224.

Information from BBKA

BBKA has an insurance scheme for members to cover our tools and equipment. It is quite surprising how much our tools and equipment can be worth, and they might not be fully covered by your own household insurance. For further information, please contact www.beekeepersinsurance.co.uk

Don't forget there are a number of online training modules available which you can use to help you get through your various exams. Taking exams is not essential, but it is a great way of consolidating your knowledge and skills.

Liz Birchenough, Treasurer

Bees Behind the Plaster



Bees were causing a problem for roofers at a house in the Darenth Valley in October. Tim Johnston agreed to have a look and found that because the building was covered in scaffolding, access to the bee entrance hole on the second floor was simple and safe. The bees had taken up residence between the inner and outer lathe and plaster walls, with access via the hole left when an old waste water pipe was removed. The brood, most of the stores and a lot of bees were transferred to a nucleus but at dusk Tim found that a clump of bees had returned to the top of the cavity and were presumably clustered around the queen. The following day, with the help of John Farrow and his bee-vac, the bees were removed.

For more pictures click here to visit our website:

<https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Bee-Removal-from-Farningham-House.pdf>



Decorators in at Hilbert Road

Towards the end of November, a new beekeeper and member, Huw, helped me to paint the bee house at Hilbert Road with preservatives in two colours and it now looks pristine. Huw did most of the work and we have agreed to meet again to give the bee house another coat and possibly to start on the shed. I am so glad that we now have another enthusiastic supporter lending a hand.

Vic Webb, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

Another Colony in the Wall



In November, Vic Webb went to rescue bees from behind the tiles of a farmhouse. They had been there for more than seven years but the owner wanted them removed because he was about to have building work. Hanging tiles were removed to reveal a large area of honeycomb. All the comb was cut out and housed with the bees in a nucleus. However, the next day a large number of bees had assembled at the top of the cavity, probably around the queen, so John Farrow went along to help remove them with his bee-vac.

All the bees, in three nucleus boxes, were taken to Vic's apiary. Once the bees had had time to settle Vic found that they had merged into one colony and were flying well.

Go to our website to see more pictures under SWARMS/BEES IN BUILDINGS, or click on this link:

<https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Bee-Extraction-4-and-5th-Nov-2020.pdf>

Membership Renewal

If you have forgotten to renew your Branch membership, now is the time to act. If you have mislaid the form that was emailed then please contact Liz Birchenough: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Bees on the Net

New on our Branch website this month is a video reporting that mycelium can dramatically reduce various bee diseases. Paul Stamets tested extracts from the mycelium of multiple polypore fungal species known to have antiviral properties. Extracts from amadou (Fomes) and reishi (Ganoderma) fungi reduced the levels of honey bee deformed wing virus (DWV) and Lake Sinai virus (LSV) in a dose-dependent manner.

In field trials, colonies fed *Ganoderma resinaceum* extract exhibited a 79-fold reduction in DWV and a 45,000-fold reduction in LSV compared with control colonies. These findings indicate honey bees may gain health benefits from fungi and their antimicrobial compounds.

You can find the link to the video on our website <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/> under WEB WATCH/PEST & DISEASES or click on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MSrD7-nduyo>

John Farrow, Website Editor

Branch Honey for Sale



Covid restrictions have made it difficult to sell our club apiary honey at shows and other events this year. This means that there is still plenty of honey for sale from both Barrwood, near Sevenoaks, and Hilbert Road, in Tunbridge Wells. Honey sales are an important source of revenue for the Branch. There is no limit on the number of jars you can buy. The Tunbridge Wells honey is bottled in 1lb jars, costing £6.50 each; the Sevenoaks honey is bottled in 12oz jars, costing £5 each. To buy, contact Liz Birchenough: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Send items for the newsletter to Mary Staffurth: marystaffurth@yahoo.com