

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER JULY 2021

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Working Hard at Hilbert Road



colonies were seen at various stages of development and in different kinds of hives. Work continues to improve the inside of the store house and the bee house, where shelving is being made from old cupboards and installed. A small team of willing helpers is being developed including Robin, Huw, Paddy, Martin and Tania.



Huw making and putting up shelving

We lost four colonies in late spring with shocking weather and non-laying queens, but apiary meetings have continued with good numbers of people attending, including new members and some beginners.

At one meeting, attended by John Hendrie, I went through a number of hives and a queenless colony was identified. John was able to give his advice and

Apart from clearing up and restoring hives and frames, a 30 yard section of green netting (obtained from Peter Hutton) has been put up on the boundary with Hilbert Close to provide further security for neighbours from bee flights.

My thanks to long standing members the Warres, from Frant, who have retired from beekeeping and kindly made a donation of a useful trolley and hive parts.

I was able to obtain a swarm from Wadhurst which has been added to the apiary and I made splits to restore bee stock numbers. Hopefully we will have a crop of honey.

The Tunbridge Wells Courier did a feature on our apiary in its June 11 issue covering two full pages with five photographs of 'Yours Truly' at the beehives. If you did not see the article it was probably because I bought up most copies! Photographs can be ordered on 01604 683902. Enquiries have been made from prospective beekeepers as a result of the publication.



Robin making up frames

Vic Webb, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

Introduction to Beekeeping Course

We have been trying to plan our next classroom training day for beginners but unfortunately we will have to postpone due to the latest extension to Covid restrictions. We will circulate everyone as soon as we are able to go ahead meeting indoors safely. Our outdoor apiary sessions can proceed as planned.

Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary

A Lesson from the Barrwood Bees

With the welcome change in the weather, the bluebells have finally given way to other woodland plants. I don't know how much honey there will be this year, but there will be plenty of blackberries!

Barrwood is the most glorious and peaceful location, but it is also the perfect spot for bees. Apart from a few hardy souls strolling along the footpath at the edge of the woodland, we are largely undisturbed. The tree cover provides dappled shade in high summer, and protection from the worst of the winter weather. As the woodland has not been heavily managed, the undergrowth is not treated so there is a wide range of native plants growing happily, which provides forage for our bees throughout the year.

The hives are well spread out, so now we have been able to open our doors again, members can move round without having to engage in the "social distance shuffle".

With the change in the weather, we have been looking out for signs that the bees are preparing to swarm. By chance, one of our new members was undertaking an inspection under personal supervision when queen cells were seen. So, as well as learning how to inspect, he got an additional lesson in how to split the colony into a nucleus! Learning this type of skill first hand makes the process much more obvious than reading about it in a book.

Looking forward to July and August, we are hoping that the bees will be settled into honey production. We are planning the honey harvest for early August and will let you know details closer to the date.

Liz Birchenough

July in the Apiary

July is upon us and yet the weather is somewhat indifferent. One day last week the bees were flying strongly across to 50 acres of field beans and, nearer home, to the blackberries. Yet on many other days the bees have been confined to their hives, those workers flying have been hard pressed to make it home with a full crop.

The lime trees are in full flower as I write, the sweet chestnuts are close behind, but the weather is uncertain. Make sure you put extra supers on your strongest colonies right now, not in a day or two. In order to ripen the incoming daily flow of nectar, the bees need three times the space of the ripened honey. If you watch closely near your hives of an evening you can enjoy that sweet smell of the ripening process.

This is a time when the bees will fill every available space with nectar, including the brood nest if a super is not available, thus depriving the queen of egg-laying space and precipitating a late swarm.

A swarm in July is not worth a fly!

It is just over a year since my disastrous fire when all my beekeeping equipment and woodworking tools and machinery were lost. You will be pleased to hear that I have just started to produce my own foundation in a purpose-made work station, next is to get the woodworking set-up under way. I am grateful to those few members who gave me some assistance by way of wax etc.

Peter Hutton, Branch President



Bees in t

Sarah Rapley and I spent three days extracting a colony from beneath the roof of Pembury.

We were contacted by the owner to replace the windows on the building. On our request, the owner provided access relatively easy.

The colony had swarmed a few days before and had left about half the bees behind.

If you want to see the details of the extraction, it is documented on our website under

BUILDINGS. The link is: <https://www.sevenoaksbeekeeping.co.uk/content/uploads/2021/06/Pembury-Extraction.pdf>

John Farrow

A Chance to Keep Bees at Knole



A land agent for the Knole Estate in Sevenoaks has contacted the branch to ask if any beekeepers would be interested in having an apiary at Knole Park. The site is an apple orchard, which was recently planted up in the old walled garden. The arrangement would involve the granting of an annual licence for a small fee. If you are interested call Frances Reed on 01273 407059 | 07471 355463 to explore possibilities.

You can also follow this link to our website for more details, including a plan of the orchard. <https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Knole-Estate-Apple-Orchard-1.pdf>



Vic Webb took these two photos at his apiary. He lifted the lid from one of his nuc boxes to find a nest of baby birds. They weren't the only ones to have set up home. A swarm of bees had also arrived to take over an empty hive.



Apiary Meetings

Monday 5 July at 11am at Hilbert Road Apiary
Saturday 10 July at 2pm at Barrwood Apiary
Monday 12 July at 11am at Hilbert Road Apiary
Monday 19 July at 11am at Hilbert Road Apiary
Saturday 24 July at 2pm at Barrwood Apiary

Go to our website for all the latest beekeeping news: <http://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/>

Send pictures or items for the newsletter to marystaffurth@yahoo.com