

**SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
BEEKEEPERS  
BRANCH NEWSLETTER  
SEPTEMBER 2021**

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## **The Honey Show**

The committee is delighted to announce that this year's judge will be Paul Abbott. It will be wonderful to see you all after such a long time in lockdown. Don't worry if you are not sure about your honey or wax, you are very welcome to try some of the other classes such as cakes, or the decorative item. The show will be open after 2pm, when the judging will be finished. For our new members especially, it will be a great chance to meet other members and look at the wide range of produce that comes from our local area.

Just a quick reminder, if you are entering class 13 or 14, 6 jars labelled ready for sale, please don't use security tabs on the lid, as the judge will need to remove the lids to check the clarity of the honey surface.

The honey show is on September 18 at St. John's Church Hall, Foxbush, Hildenborough.

*Liz Birchenough, Treasurer and Membership Secretary*

## **Indoor Meetings are Back**

Our first talk of the season will be on Tuesday 21st September at Weald Memorial Hall at 7.30pm. The speaker is Mr Andrew Gibbs, who is Chief Executive of Beecraft and co-author of Bee Space to Bee Hive, and Bee Hive to Beekeeper. The topic of his talk is Drone psychology; the weaker sex?

In line with current Covid advice the chairs will be spaced, and the windows will be open, so please bring a jacket. It would be appreciated if you would wear a mask, as some attendees might not be fully vaccinated. If you are unwell, or have been advised to isolate, please do not attend this event. A register of attendance will be taken.

*Liz Birchenough*

## **Preparing for Extraction at Barrwood**

August is always a busy time in the apiary (*writes Liz Birchenough*) especially when we have been dodging heavy rain and high winds! Nevertheless, we got lucky with the weather for our Tuesday afternoon meeting and assisted by a good turnout of members, we set about putting clearing boards in place in advance of extraction at the end of the week. This was a great chance for our less experienced members to get hands-on experience and learn how to decide which frames should be selected for extraction, how to adjust Porter escapes, and how to ensure there is enough space to encourage the bees to come down from the supers.

After a good afternoon's work, we had the chance to talk about ensuring the apiary is in the best possible state going into winter. There was a long discussion about the various types of varroa control. Like everything else associated with bees, there are a multitude of available options for the beekeeper to consider. Whichever treatment you choose, please follow the manufacturer's instructions to the letter, and don't forget you are required to record your varroa treatment in your apiary logbook. You should record the type, batch number and expiry date of the treatment, the date applied and the dose. You should also note the supplier from whom the treatment was purchased.

## **The Honey Harvest**

It has not been the most suitable of seasons for the bees at Barrwood (*writes Cliff Hayward*) but crops of beans grown near Shipbourne church ensured a late season nectar flow. Porter escapes were fitted into crown boards in most cases, although we do possess a rhombus clearer board. These types of clearer boards are considered a superior design as, having no moving parts, they are not prone to failure in the same way as porter escapes. However, returning the following evening to pick up the supers, I found they were all free of bees.

Thanks to Sue, Tim, Ian, Martin and Ravi, who answered my request for help with the harvest. With a mix of experienced hands and those learning the process and gaining experience, I was able to spend my time selecting the best frame for exhibiting at our honey show, making the tea and supplying the honey cake. I clearly need the practice as far as entering the cake class is concerned. Over 70lb of honey was collected.

The focus of the September meeting at the apiary will be the preparation of the colonies for successful overwintering.

## September in the Apiary

Those of you whose bees have produced any surplus honey will, I hope, have extracted only as much as is really surplus. Extracting every last ounce is not wise. The bees may not have reduced the water content sufficiently throughout the super to warrant removal and they themselves will be moving this underripe honey into the brood nest just as fast as the cells there are vacated. Despite the temptation, you should consider that supplementary feeding of sugar syrup might not be in the best interest of your bees since from now on the overnight temperatures are lower and there are far fewer bees in the colony to raise the temperature sufficiently to evaporate the surplus water.

Those of you who wish to hire one of the two Branch extractors should contact the Liz Birchenough for the one held in Tonbridge and Sarah Rapley for the other in Sevenoaks, which will extract brood combs tangentially. Both extract super combs radially. The charge is £15.00.

Shut the entrance to the hive down to no more than three or four bee spaces, this will enable the bees to keep out robbers including wasps. Hornets have already abandoned their nests and are now hawking other insects, including bees. Wasps are vacating their nests from now on and will be attracted to beehives to steal honey. Wasps are more agile than bees and if not deterred will so demoralise the bees as to stop them defending the hive.

Returning supers to be cleaned up and feeding should be done as late in the day as possible to deter robbing between colonies. If a hive is being robbed, then it needs removing right away from the apiary and the entrance almost closed just sufficiently for the inhabitants to enter and exit.

Wax moths are prolific at the moment and creep into the hives to lay their eggs. Spraying every comb with Certan B401 (*Bacillus thuringiensis*) will not harm the bees but will starve any wax moth larvae that consume the comb. Spray all stored honey combs as well.

The AGM is not far off and I would urge all members to attend if they can because there are a number of important decisions to be made and your input is required for the future smooth running of the Branch.

*Peter Hutton, Branch President*

## Oxalic Acid Varroa Treatment - Now or Later?

It may seem like a good idea to use Oxalic acid treatment on the hives while the supers are removed, so as not to taint the honey. However, when I rang up to order Oxalic tablets from the man at Park Beekeeping, Greenwich, he reminded



me that this was not the best time because the most effective time to kill varroa is when there is no brood, which would possibly be in December. This my simple Oxalic Acid sublimation kit.

- White tub of Oxalic Acid tablets.
- 5 copper tubes, enough for 5 hives.
- 5 ekes with holes drilled in one side.
- Gas blow torch.

Method: place 1 or 2 tablets in each tube depending on whether there are 1 or 2 brood boxes. Place the eke under the crown board and play the blow torch on the protruding copper pipe, long enough to see vapour emitting from the entrance. N.B. Preferably do it on a day when there is little or no wind, and always stand upwind so that any vapour drifts away from you.

Also remember that the copper tubes need to cool down before removal as they get extremely hot.

*John Farrow*

## Looking for an Apiary Site?

I own a small vineyard just south of Tunbridge Wells called Wildwood Vineyard. As part of our diversification programme and in a bid to be even more bee friendly, I would like local beekeepers to put some beehives in our vineyard. I am well aware that grapevines are self-pollinated, but we are in the heart of the countryside (in Eridge), surrounded by meadows and orchards and we are also developing bee-friendly flower strips around the vineyard.

The vineyard is fairly isolated, located between Tunbridge Wells and Crowborough and accessed down a bridle path. We have storage facilities on site, and all I'd ask for in return is a jar or two of honey.

If anyone is interested, please contact me direct by email: [paul@paulolding.co.uk](mailto:paul@paulolding.co.uk) or phone (07970 155303)

*Paul Olding, Wildwood Vineyard*

<https://www.wildwoodvineyard.co.uk/>

## Hilbert Road

Hilbert Road Apiary will remain closed to general members. The bees will be monitored and managed over the winter by a core team of members.

*Liz Birchenough*

### Easy Clean



I had taken off all my supers of honey and was fed up with all the sticky mess, so I took the lazy way out of cleaning the extractor and my floor protective plastic sheeting.

It took my bees, which are over 600m away, about an hour to relay the message to all their friends. After spending all afternoon hard at work, they made everything spotlessly clean.

I just had to be wary where I positioned these items in the garden so as not to raise the concerns of our neighbours.

*John Farrow*



### Tackling Wasps

I eradicated wasps from a shed at the request of two sisters in Southborough with the use of a wasp killing foam.

It was necessary to unscrew panels and I managed to get stung twice but death of the wasps was inevitable.

*Vic Webb*

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](mailto:marystaffurth@yahoo.com)