

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2021

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Photo by Liz Birchenough

A huge thanks to all committee members who helped out, especially Sue Knights and Sarah Rapley, who handled all the entry registrations. Sarah developed a spreadsheet to make the whole process quicker and easier, which worked really well on the day.
Liz Birchenough, Membership Secretary and Treasurer

Judge's Comments

Paul Abbott said he was impressed that the branch had been able to stage its annual honey show. The standard was generally good and he particularly liked the cast wax although one of the blocks was too heavy. He noted that the number of cake entries was high. In the honey classes some of the jars had not been full enough and some of the set honey was not set and could have been poured out of the jar. The invention category was interesting but would have benefitted from more entries. Paul said it was unusual and very good for a branch to have cups and shields to award to winners.

The Winners

There was a good number of entries with first prizes being awarded to 11 different exhibitors. The overall points winners were Cliff and Pauline Hayward. They took first prize for their mounted, framed photograph and their bottle of sweet mead as well as a range of second and third places. A first-time winner was Jonathan Green who won in the novice class with his two jars of clear honey. The cups and certificates will all be awarded at the Branch AGM in November.

Indoor Talks Are Back

After the last minute cancellation of September's talk, our first indoor meeting will take place on Tuesday October 19 at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall, Long Barn Road, Sevenoaks Weald, TN14 6PT.
John Hendrie will give a talk on Bee Senses.

Ready for Winter at Hilbert Road

We had four hives of bees at the apiary at the start of the season and these have now been increased to seven. They are all active although there was no surplus honey. The four that came through the winter and following bad weather were plundered by me for frames of brood and stores to make up further colonies alongside swarms which I collected to bring the total to seven. Two weeks ago, I applied Apiguard as a varroa treatment to the bees and they have now been fed with syrup provided by Thornes through John Hendrie. With top ups they will have the best chance of surviving the winter.
Vic Webb, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager

The Honey Show

The first face to face event for 18 months was our Honey Show. There was a decent turn out for all the usual honey, wax, mead, cake and photograph classes, including some beautifully presented exhibits from new members. The photo shows judge Paul Abbott inspecting the surface of an exhibit in one of the clear honey classes. The torch is an essential tool for judges, highlighting the smallest speck of surface debris or granulation, and heaven forbid sticky fingerprints on the jar!

Paul Abbott is well known as an experienced photographer who has won many prizes in the past, so it was really interesting to see what caught his eye in the photo class. He was looking for something different where the subject matter was not overwhelmed by the background. The artistic or decorative item class is always difficult to judge, and Paul found it particularly hard to choose a winner from a number of completely different items. Eventually he chose a working battery-powered nightlight with a bee cut-out so that the light would project a little glowing bee on the wall.



Photo by Cliff Hayward

Keeping the Brood Warm at Barrwood

Having extracted the honey at the beginning of last month, the focus since has been on preparing the colonies for winter. The hives were treated with Apiguard and then fed syrup. This will continue for as long as the bees continue to take it down. A colony that was collected from a building but subsequently proved to be queenless was united with another small colony. There was some discussion as to whether a second small colony should also be united but, instead, it was reduced from a National brood box to a six frame polynucleus. It is hoped that the smaller space and better insulation properties of the polystyrene will enable it to survive the winter. It has always been a conundrum, especially if you only have two colonies. Do you unite them so that you have one strong colony going into winter or is this a case of putting all your eggs in one basket? The choice is invariably a personal one. Our final scheduled meeting, on Saturday 16 October, will concentrate on fitting mouse guards, removing queen excluders and placing the supers below the brood box. This winter configuration keeps the brood box warmer and ensures that as the queen increases her egg laying rate in the spring, she will be laying in the brood box and not the super. For those colonies that are wintered on two brood boxes, this issue does not arise.

Cliff Hayward, Chairman

Beekeeping in October

Bayvarol or Apistan are suitable varroa treatment since there is no resistance currently. Both are pyrethroids, so use one or the other. Bayvarol consists of four strips whereas Apistan has only two strips. Both types must be hung in the brood nest for exactly six weeks and you should follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully. They must be removed at the end of the six weeks because if they are left any longer the amount of pesticide leaching out diminishes, failing to kill the target Varroa mites, thus creating immunity in any remaining mites. Follow up in December or January with either sublimated oxalic acid (simplest but use a mask designed for acid conditions) or oxalic dissolved in sugar syrup. Syrup must be used up within a fortnight.

Reduce entrances now if you have not already done so, and seal any gaps or holes in or between boxes. Wasps are still a problem, especially those with nests in heated houses.

Consider whether you need any extra equipment or foundation for next year as there are stockists wishing to clear items at a discount leaving space for next year's stock.

In just the last days of September a starvation swarm was reported.

The poisoning of bees in Pembury has now been found to have been an accident as an adjacent wasp nest was in the same area, the pest controller took photographs of the works. I have now received the COSSH assessment and method statement from the pest control company. I have now submitted a sample of my honey extracted from my adjacent hives, the cost is £110 + VAT per chemical searched for, any beekeeper with bees within five kilometres of Lower Green, Pembury who wishes to sell their honey to the public can contact me for details. Email is my preferred contact method peter.hutton@btinternet.com (Tel: 07446 092948)

Peter Hutton, President

Courses for New Beekeepers

There are still places on our one-day Introduction to Beekeeping courses. They are aimed at novice and aspiring beekeepers. The aim is to provide you with enough information to be able to make decisions about starting to keep bees yourself.

We start with the basic lifecycle of the honey bee colony, which dictates the beekeepers activities during the year. We also introduce you to the most common issues you will encounter, such as swarming behaviour and dealing with varroa and common pests. We will also take a look at the practicalities: Which hive? Which beesuit? Where should I have an apiary? What tools and accessories do I really need? Where do I get all this stuff and how much will it cost? We will be bringing examples for you to see. We will also show you how and where to get help and information.

The courses are Saturday 16th October or Sunday 24th October from 10am to 4pm at Weald Memorial Hall, Long Barn Rd, Sevenoaks Weald TN14 6PT. The course fee is £35 for members or friends of Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells Beekeepers, £45 for non-members. Contact Liz Birchenough: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Apiary Sites on Offer



Riverhill

We are looking for a beekeeper who would like to have an apiary at Riverhill Himalayan Gardens, Sevenoaks. We would like someone who has their own bees and hives and would be happy to supply Riverhill with honey at a discounted rate. The honey sells very well here, and ideally we would like about 80-100 jars a season. We are open to the public from March to October. The apiary site is at the edge of a meadow marked by the yellow dot in the photo. Our previous beekeeper used a wheelbarrow to transport hives or when collecting honey. It is an uphill walk of about 15 minutes from the main car park. If someone wanted to put hives in the gardens, we would ideally like them to be able to mentor a staff member who would like to learn how to keep bees. We are closed to the public on Mondays and Tuesdays - so ideally this would be the best time to attend to the bees.

Angela Wildgoose, Shop Manager, Riverhill Himalayan Gardens. Tel: 0777 3049646

Wrotham

The Branch has received an offer of apiary space from Joanna in Wrotham Hill, who has land including paddocks, wooded areas and hay meadows. If you are interested, please contact Joanna on 0797156534 to discuss details.

Honey for Sale

The honey from our Barrwood apiary is on sale at £5 for a 12oz jar. The honey has a very intense flavour. Contact Liz Birchenough: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Bees in the Roof



A homeowner in Culverden Down, Tunbridge Wells, called for the help of beekeepers to remove a nest from beneath a flat roof (*pictured*). I removed them with assistance from Huw and Paddy.

On 20th September I received a call to remove a swarm of bees ten feet up a tree by the music room at Tunbridge Wells Grammar School for Girls. It had been there for seven days. I took a poly nuc hive containing a frame of honey from one of my hives as well as drawn comb plus a ladder. I brushed the bees off a bough and they went in as good as gold. I then transported them to my apiary at Blue Diamond garden centre in the Eridge road. I checked them the next day and they had settled in to make two and a half seams of bees.

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