

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER JUNE 2022

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Scout Bees



On May 19, Sue Knights and I donned outdoor clothing to join the 12th Tunbridge Wells Scouts at the Adamswell Camping Centre, near Langton Green. We had been invited by the scouts to give them a brief overview of beekeeping as part of their World Bee Day activities. There were 45 scouts, between the ages of 10 and 14, plus leaders. We took along a range of exhibits, such as a hive and frames, some bee suits and, as we were outdoors, we also took some smokers.

We started with a quick quiz and some bee facts. We then made sure they were aware of the importance of all pollinators, not just honeybees. We talked briefly about how honeybees live as a colony, and how we look after them. The scouts then had the chance to try on some protective clothing, and we took an unoccupied hive apart. The scouts were particularly taken with the appearance of the comb and were fascinated to find out that bees can actually make wax. However, the highlight of the event was getting the smokers alight, which can be a challenge at the best of times. The scouts were very engaged, and it was obvious that several of them had taken the trouble to do some background learning. Luckily the rain held off, a good time was had by all and maybe we will have one or two new beekeepers in the future.

Liz Birchenough



Raising Queens at Barrwood

How many times have you heard the expression: bees don't read the books? Well, just occasionally they do follow the rules. So it has proven this year with the queen raising exercise, which aims to improve our stock with young queens and to produce a few extras for supply to members. Hive number 4 was selected as our best colony. Of all the docile colonies, in this one the bees stayed quiet on the comb and there was little evidence of excessive propolis production.



We followed the Millar technique as described in this month's Beecraft. (Although we didn't use a cloak board, just a temporary split of the colony). We introduced a Millar frame into the centre of the brood nest on the Tuesday, so that the queen would lay eggs in this and on the Sunday the frame would contain one day old larvae and could be transferred to the queenless colony.

Our queen raising colony was made temporarily queenless by dividing a double brooded colony. After a couple of hours, they would have sensed they were queenless and started the emergency impulse. By introducing our Millar frame we hoped that they would draw out a number of queen cells, which is just what they did. Having started raising the cells, reintroducing the queen makes no difference. They continue to raise the queens under the swarming impulse.

Typically, on the day arranged for distributing the queen cells into nucs it was raining. We had a day's leeway but with the following day forecast as stormy we continued in the rain. Thanks to Bob Blair, who stoically carried on despite the occupants of hive number 4 letting us know in typical bee language that they did not want to be disturbed in such weather.

So, having produced six nucleus colonies, each with a queen cell that will be ready to hatch a few days later, apart from feeding, there is little we can do but wait for three weeks before inspecting for eggs. The next couple of weeks of fine weather will be crucial to the successful mating of the new queens.

Cliff Hayward, Chairman & Barrwood Apiary Manager

The Waiting Game

This month we are learning to be patient! Swarm preparations have been stepped up inside the hives, this has resulted in the division of our colonies, now we wait and hope that the queens are able to get out and mate successfully.



It had been more than 4 weeks since we performed an artificial swarm and divided the original nucleus colony into three. The moment of truth was upon us, time to see what was going on inside the brood nest. Two of the colonies had eggs, larvae and sealed brood. In one of the nucs the queen had yet to begin laying. I am confident, as the temper is good and they are bringing in pollen and nectar, that she is there somewhere but just a bit elusive.

Once again my thanks to everyone who has supported our efforts at Hilbert Road. I love it when a plan comes together!

Sue Knights, Hilbert Road Apiary Manager.

Wax workshop



As a new venture this year we are holding a wax workshop aimed at encouraging more of you to exhibit at our Honey Show in the autumn (*writes Cliff Hayward*). We will be showing you how to prepare clean wax from your old comb and then give you the chance to try making wax wraps, moulded or dipped candles. This is an ideal opportunity for you to get the non-beekeeping side of your family involved. There will be no charge for attending but donations for the cost of materials would be appreciated. Also, if anyone has any moulds that they would be prepared to loan for the evening it would be appreciated as we have a limited number. The workshop will be at Weald Memorial Hall at 7.30pm on Tuesday 21 June. Because of the hands-on nature of the evening we will have to limit numbers, so please book with Liz in advance:

membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Hives For Sale

I have a number of nucs and full hives for sale (National type) in the Tonbridge area. Contact Gavin on 07970 810909

Hives and Extractor for Sale



I am moving house and so need to sell some of my bee equipment:
2x WBC hives with all inside fittings + Canadian clear boards, Waldron QEs.
2x Standard National hives, varroa floors & stands + Canadian clearer boards, Waldron QEs.
A hand honey extractor.
Reasonable prices, please contact Robin Toop (Tunbridge Wells):
01892 526085 Robin.toop@hotmail.co.uk

Learning From Your Bees

By Peter Hutton

Learn by studying, remember from your observations, carefully consider past, current and future changing weather patterns, note the flowering patterns of both trees as well as smaller flowers. With my town centre house and smallholding in the countryside, I see each year the effect on my bees both in colony development and honey production. Three years ago swarms emerged in April, whereas this year it was at the start of May, due to over-wintering conditions and the age of the queens. I now think you need to ensure your over-wintering queens are bred early when there are sufficient drones available to mate successfully, which requires warm weather.

I am sure open mesh floors are ideal for allowing Varroa mites to fall away from the bees but I am not so sure they should be left open through the winter after seeing how many of my open mesh floors have been shut with propolis. Feral colonies in chimneys and trees have no floor but nor do they have chilling draughts. This is an interesting thought when noting differences between colony survival and spring expansion.

I have noticed the June Gap has been underway for the past week at least and my nuclei are finding it difficult so I must feed with a vengeance.

Free Hive Parts



The following items are available free of charge in Langton Green
National pitched roof (used)
Brood box (unassembled no nails)
Top board (lacking escapes)
Varroa board
Contact Iain Combe: iain.combe@btinternet.com

Swarming Season

Perhaps two weeks or more ahead of swarming, when the decision to divide is in the offing, there are bees not only looking for nectar, pollen and water, but possible new homes. I have observed that bees looking at my many empty hives take particular notice of those with drawn comb and some honey. I watched a swarm arrive and endeavour to enter a hive I had yet to sterilise. By chance I observed the queen land; I immediately caught her and my wife fetched a queen cage into which I placed her. I then put her in an adjacent hive, which I had prepared for a swarm. There was a distinct conflict of opinions between the bees as to which hive was preferred. Roughly 50 percent each way. The caged queen was, however, the holding tool. The bees did not like the hive I put them in and I think this was because it contained all new foundation and no drawn comb. They left that hive six times over two days.

Realising their requirement I transferred them to a different hive with half foundation and half drawn comb in a different location. The change of location is important. I left the queen caged for a further day before I released her. They are now doing very well.

Peter Hutton

Diary Dates

Saturday 4 June: Vanessa Jones' Apiary. Members who would like to attend should email Liz to book a place: membership@sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk

Sunday 5 June: Apiary meeting at 11am at Hilbert Road

Saturday 11 June: Apiary meeting at 2pm at Barrwood Apiary

Sunday 19 June: Apiary meeting at 11am at Hilbert Road Apiary

Tuesday 21 June: Wax Workshop at 7.30pm at Weald Memorial Hall

Saturday 25 June: Apiary meeting at 2pm at Barrwood Apiary



Vic Webb sent in this photo of himself standing by his hive and talking to his bees.

If you have any pictures, articles or other items for next month's newsletter email marystaffurth@yahoo.com

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