

SEVENOAKS AND TUNBRIDGE WELLS BEEKEEPERS BRANCH NEWSLETTER JULY 2022

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Visit to Vanessa's Home Apiary *Words by Liz Birchenough, Pictures by Paul Abbott*



On the afternoon of Saturday 4th June, a group of members met at Vanessa Jones' home apiary near Hever Castle. At the start of the meeting, we gathered in the barn, where Vanessa had laid out a range of equipment. She demonstrated how she had transferred bees from an inherited Langstroth to a National. This involved using her home-made transition board, which was placed on top of the Langstroth to make a bee-proof seal, with the smaller National placed on top, allowing the bees to migrate upwards into their new home.



About to inspect the first colony

As we prepared to venture out to the apiary, Vanessa lit her smoker. Interestingly, she used jute string as one of her kindling materials and used a hand-held blow torch to get the body of the smoker warm: much more effective than matches or cigarette lighters.

Although the wind was a bit blustery, the rain held off as we were given a tour of the orchard apiary.



Unclipped, marked queen in the centre of the comb

Vanessa and her husband, Tim, opened up several hives to demonstrate the difference in the way colonies develop, and how to adapt techniques to the best advantage for different colonies.

Vanessa reiterated the importance of bee health and hive hygiene, and as part of the demonstration showed how to extract larvae, and what to look for in terms of healthy development.



It was wonderful to see several new members actively participating in the demonstrations and asking searching questions.

To round off the afternoon, Vanessa provided a wonderful tea. The branch is indebted to Vanessa and her family for their generosity and hospitality.

Go to our website for more pictures and details about the visit to Vanessa's apiary:

<https://www.sevenoaksbeekeepers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Visit-to-Vanessa-Jones-APIARY.pdf>

Honey Show: Save the Date!

The Branch Honey Show will be on Saturday 1st October at St John's Church Centre, Hildenborough. The rules and schedule will be issued with the August newsletter. All members are welcome to submit entries, so even those of you without your own bees can enter the photography, handicraft, or baked goods classes. There are also novice classes for anyone who has not won a honey class previously, so if you are new to beekeeping you can still enter with confidence.

Wax Workshop

Words and Pictures by Liz Birchenough



We don't usually hold indoor meetings during the summer but this year it was decided to run some workshops to encourage members to try out some new activities and think about entering the Branch Honey Show. At the wax workshop, Cliff Hayward opened the meeting with a short talk about what wax can be used for outside the apiary, and a slide show of some extraordinary wax modelling from the National Honey Show. There were several activities: dipped candles (led by Cliff), rolled candles and moulded candles (led by Pauline Hayward) and wax food wraps (led by Sue Knights).

On the dipped candles section, attendees

learned how to achieve smooth, straight sides. With the moulded candles, the main points were selecting the right wick, keeping the wick straight and central, and ensuring the mould was correctly aligned to prevent a seam forming down the side. The rolled candles seemed easy at first but getting the wax sheet rolled round the wick and keeping the roll straight requires practice.

The wax wraps were a new activity, the trick seems to be spreading the wax granules or flakes evenly but not too thickly over the cloth. The wax sets very quickly, so you can easily see if you have any bald patches, which can be fixed with a quick re-heating. Best of all, once the wax is applied, the edges are cut with pinking shears, so they don't fray - no need for hems.

Pauline also brought along an arrangement of wax flowers and examples of moulded wax products. Sue gave a brief explanation of preparation of wax from old frames and demonstrated her DIY wax steamer.

The event was a great success, and everyone came away with new ideas. Many thanks to all those who participated, especially Cliff, Pauline and Sue for demonstrating. Martin and Liz helped with the setting up, lifting and carrying.

